AU-gust Writing Challenge 2024

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AU-gust Writing Challenge 2024

by slashyrogue

Summary

A collection of my daily AU-gust Writing Challenge fics/ficlets filled with many different types of Hannigram AUs

Day 1: Canon Divergence

A/N: I took some dialogue from the show and changed Mizumono's ending =)

“We could disappear now. Tonight. Feed your dogs. Leave a note for Alana and never see her or Jack again. Almost polite.”

Will stares at Hannibal for far too long as he lets the words sink in, and the temptation is so great he can’t look away. He swallows around the tears that sting the corner of his eyes and picks up his wine glass, downing the rest of it in one go as he sets it down hard.

“Will?”

“Then this would be our last…supper,” Will says, forcing himself to smile.

“Of this life,” Hannibal says, looking at the table while Will can’t take his eyes off him, “I served lamb.”

“Sacrificial.”

“I don’t need a sacrifice,” Hannibal says, not looking at him still, “Do you?”

Will lets out a long breath. “Hannibal….”

“Do you need a sacrifice, Will?”

“Why don’t you?” Will asks, making Hannibal look at him then, “After all that’s happened, after…..all you’ve done to keep yourself hidden….don’t you need Jack to know? To see?”

Hannibal just stares at him. “No,” he says, “I do believe restricting Jack from that truth would be a fate worse than any death.”

“Jack won’t stop looking if we leave,” Will says, his voice shaking, “He…he wants justice. He….”

“....wants me,” Hannibal says, the neutral look gone as his lip curls, “Not you. Would you make me the lamb for Jack to slaughter? To drag away to pay for my crimes?”

Will’s blood runs cold. “Hannibal….”

Hannibal grips his hand tight, leaning in, and Will feels a tear run down his cheek.

“I would forgive you,Will, he whispers, his voice thick, “I….I…I don’t believe Jack could ever forgive you now that he’s seen what you’re capable of.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Will lies, “I….” he tries to move and Hannibal’s grip tightens, “Hannibal, let go.”

Hannibal lifts Will’s hand and presses his lips to it as Will gasps.

He looks up through his lashes and even in the dim light Will can see they’re wet with tears.

“I can see the indecision in your eyes, Will. I can see….a future you never knew you wanted. A future that scares you. I can see it.”

Will shakes his head. “Hanni…bal….I…..”

Hannibal smiles and puts Will’s hand on his cheek. “I can see that very same future, Will, and it does not scare me. I….I can see it.”

He can hardly see through his tears.

“I can’t.”

“Yes, you can.”

“I….”

Hannibal kisses him then, the shock knocking the air from his lungs, and Will kisses back with desperate, trembling lips before they break for breath both panting.

“Will.”

“Yes,” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “Yes. I…..please.”

Hannibal smiles through his tears, kissing Will again, and he grabs his hand as they leave the house without even looking back. He rushes to the passenger seat of Hannibal’s Bentley, shaking, and when Hannibal slides into the driver’s side he grabs his hand again as they smile at each other.

No words are needed, just squeezes of hands as they drive to Will’s house where they feed the dogs. It’s harder then, to pet every single one of them just one last time but he does, and Hannibal pulls him into an embrace when they get into the car as he buries his face into his neck.

Neither of them speaks, not even when they stop for gas along a drive that Will has no idea of its destination, and yet he’s more comfortable than he’s been in years. He leans against Hannibal’s shoulder eventually, and Hannibal kisses his hand before he drifts off only to wake up to his phone ringing.

He pulls it out and sees Jack’s name.

Hannibal tenses beside him and Will just rolls down the window before he throws the phone out.

Hannibal lets out a long breath and Will lays against him again, though this time he moves his head up to a warm shoulder.

Then, for the first time in hours, Hannibal speaks.

“Was it Randall?”

Will closes his eyes. “Y…yes.”

Hannibal sighs.

“Perhaps someday she’ll darken our doorstep,” he says, making Will smile, “Though if not….I applaud your creativity.”

“Thank you.”

“And forgive you,” he continues, his voice thick, “I….I forgive you.”

Will squeezes his hand.

“There was….little….that wasn’t real,” he admits, “And I didn’t want to admit that but….yeah.”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “I know.”

Will falls asleep again, comfortable, and wakes up to Hannibal's lips to his. He winces even as he smiles.

"How long was the drive?"

"Too long," he admits, "Come. A real bed awaits."

Will sits up and sees a house, nicer than most. "How many houses do you own?"

"Many," Hannibal admits, getting out of the car, "But few in my own name."

Will yawns as he gets out of the car, and together they walk up to the house but he's shocked when the sliding glass door opens to reveal a ghost.

"A…Abigail?"

She looks at Hannibal, who nods, and then smiles at Will. "Hi Will."

Will's eyes fill with tears as he lets Hannibal's hand go. "You….you…."

"Will…."

Abigail frowns. "I've been safe," she says, "Hannibal's taken really good care of me."

He walks away from them both, so angry he's ready to get into the car to go back, and he almost misses the cliff stumbling back in surprise.

“Whoa!”

Will stares down, tears falling, and he hears the gravel crunch under Hannibal’s footsteps.

“The bluff is eroding,” Hannibal says, as Will stares down, “There was more land when I was here with Miriam Lass.”

“Now you’re here with me…and….apparently you were here for a long damn time with Abigail.”

“Will…”

He glares at him. “Was this a test?” he asks, “What would’ve happened if I said no to running? Would I be bleeding out on the floor in your kitchen? Would Abigail?”

Hannibal frowns. “I have forgiven you for your lies,” he says softly, stepping closer, “Can you not forgive me?”

Will shakes his head, looking down again at the water below. “It’s not the same.”

“Will….please.”

“You made me think you killed her.”

“Yes.”

“You….”

Hannibal comes closer and puts a hand on his shoulder making Will close his eyes.

“We’re here now, Will,” he whispers, closer still as his breath teases Will’s cheek, “All of us. We can be go anywhere. Do anything. Together.”

Will turns to look at him and sighs. “Abigail Hobbs and her two killer dads.”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Yes.”

He kisses Hannibal softly as he nods, shaking as Hannibal pulls him into his arms, and every bit of anger falls away.

The past is like the cliff, pieces of it falling into nothingness as he clings to the future he so badly wants, and as Hannibal’s arms around him make Will feel like it’s possible.

Their future.

He opens his eyes to see Abigail standing by the sliding door.

She smiles at him.

Will smiles back.

“We can be happy,” he whispers, feeling Hannibal’s kiss on his cheek.

Hannibal smiles against his cheek. “Yes, we can.”

Day 2: Colourless

The first color Will ever saw was red.

It was splashed across the board of the Minnesota Shrike Murders, the bodies of so many young girls, and he fell back in surprise as he stared at the man who'd been sitting with Jack stared back.

"Will? Dr. Lecter?"

They both just blinked in surprise as they stepped closer, no words spoken, and the minute they touched hands Will visibly shuddered.

"Hello."

"Um, hi."

"Am I missing something?"

Both Will and the stranger, Dr. Lecter apparently, turned to Jack.

"Will and I are soulmates."

Jack blinked. "What?"

Dr. Lecter squeezed Will's hand as he looked at him again. "We can both now see color, Jack."

"Oh, um," Jack said, his voice not sounding very happy, "Congrats, I guess. Can we---"

"Dr. Lecter and I---"

"Hannibal," Dr. Lecter said, smiling, "Call me Hannibal."

Will let out a long breath, his throat dry, and looked down at Hannibal's tie. It was the same color he'd seen on the bodies, and a deep darker one he could not yet name. "Hannibal," he said, as his soulmate's smile widened, "I….um….can we just not talk about this right now?"

Hannibal's smile faded as he nodded. "Yes, of course."

They barely spoke the rest of the time in Jack's office and yet Will could not stop feeling Hannibal's eyes on him the whole time. It was both exhilarating and embarrassing, to say the least, and by the time they were tasked with assignments for the following day the two of them went into the elevator together.

It was awkward, being alone, but Will tried not to speak.

Hannibal didn't.

“You’re a very handsome man.”

Will blushed as he turned to look at him. “Um, I….you know I’m not….it’s never been about guys for me.”

Hannibal smiled. “Sexuality is a fluid thing, Will. Can you say you’ve never appreciated male beauty?”

He swallowed as he pushed glasses up on his nose. “I mean, beautiful people are beautiful people.

“Even in black and white.”

“Y…yeah.”

“What about me?” Hannibal asked, stepping closer, “Am I….attractive?”

Will stepped back. “Look, I know we’re soulmates and we both have this whole new world to deal with, but I feel like you’re coming on really strong. I don’t appreciate it. Soulmates aren’t required to be in romantic relationships, Hannibal. The connection just means there’s a higher probability that if we did get together, we’d…”

Hannibal eyed Will up and down. “Be very compatible sexually, intellectually, and perhaps even socially. I may not seem like I’m your type of person, Will but---” the doors opened, “… there is no one more your type.” he stepped out and turned to look at Will, “I do believe I will leave you for today. Have a good evening, Will.”

Will blinked as Hannibal just turned to walk away and an almost anger settled in him as he rushed out.

“Hey!”

Hannibal turned halfway across the lobby and Will was struck by the sight of him in all the lights from the doors and windows. He was….beautiful….almost otherworldly. He blushed as Hannibal cocked his head.

“Is there something more you needed to say, Will?”

Will let out a long breath. “You just walked away.”

“You asked me to not come on ‘too strong’ so I decided to part ways with you for now. Have you changed your mind?”

He swallowed. “I just….you said I was handsome.”

“Yes.”

“I….you’re….not….unattractive.”

Hannibal smiled. “Should I swoon now, Will, or later?”

Will laughed.

“Look, I’m not---I don’t even date let alone think about forever. I….” he looked into Hannibal’s eyes, “I can hardly look people in the eye because of what I see in them and yet I see nothing in yours.”

“A high compliment given your empathy,” Hannibal said, as more people came through, crowding them, “Will…”

Will stumbled as someone walked by and nearly pushed them into one another. Hannibal glared.

“How rude.”

He frowned. “I’m used to not being noticed.”

Hannibal turned to look at him again. “That won’t be a problem anymore I assure you.”

Will blushed. “Hannib---”

He reached out to touch Will’s cheek, and for the first time Will noticed the brown in his eyes.

It was almost red it was so warm, and he didn’t know the name of this new color but he would later.

Will would know every color of Hannibal by the end.

“Maybe I want you to….come on strong,” he whispered, close now, and the loudness of people walking through the lobby made it hard but he knew Hannibal heard when he leaned in closer, “Really strong.”

Hannibal stepped back abruptly, confusing him, and reached into his jacket pocket to hand Will a card.

“This is my address,” he said softly, as Will took it, “I had hoped to invite you to dinner today regardless of this outcome but now I insist on it.”

Will smiled. “Ok.”

Hannibal backed away slowly. “Seven p.m.,” he said louder now, “And no later than seven thirty. I despise lateness.”

He laughed.

“I’ll be there at eight.”

The smile he got in return made Will’s heart skip a beat.

“I’ll lock the doors.”

Will watched him go, new colors going by as he followed Hannibal needing to see him more, and a whole new world of color was in front of him.

But he couldn’t look away from the colors of his soulmate.

Later, he showed up at eight fifteen.

The door was unlocked.

Day 3: Dark Academia

TW: patricide, child abuse, and abuse of a dog

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Will killed his father on a Wednesday.

It was raining and he barely finished his homework when he heard, "BOY, WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT CLEANING UP THAT DOG'S SHIT?" and panicked.

"Winston, hide!" he said, as his dog did as he was taught and crawled under the bed.

Will stood up, tears in his eyes, and waited for the door to open.

His father rushed in, cheeks flush and eyes bloodshot from far too much whiskey - his favorite - as he walked up to grab hold of Will's t-shirt.

"Where is he?"

"Who, Sir?"

A smack across his face made Will cry out as he fell to the floor, and his eyes must have lingered a little too long to Winston cowering under the bed because suddenly he was pulled back by his hair hard.

"THERE!"

"NO! N...."

His father reached out to grab Winston's leg, and the cry of pain that came made Will sob. Tears fell down his cheeks as his father smacked Winston, and he tried to stop him but was kicked.

"THIS IS YOUR FAULT! YOU KILLED HIM! YOU---"

One minute Will was in tears, seething in anger at his father who spend more of Will's life resenting him for his mother's desertion more than love, and the next he watched his father's head explode into oblivion dousing the room in his viscera.

Will screamed.

And screamed.

And screamed.

It was said his screams were heard hundreds of miles away in the heads of everyone in the area.

Will screamed until he passed out, throat burning, and he woke up in a room not his own.

But Winston was laying beside him.

He let out a sob, grabbing Winston who crawled in close, and then the door to the room he was in opened.

And in came someone Will had seen only on TV and in magazines.

Hannibal Lecter.

The only known living vampire.

Hannibal sat down in a chair by Will's bed, and Will didn't move.

"Hello, Will."

He swallowed. "I....hi."

"You're probably not wondering why you're here."

Tears filled his eyes. "No," he whispered, his voice shaking, "This is....your....house. The Monster House."

Hannibal frowned and put his hand over Will's on the bed. He was shocked to find out Hannibal was warm and not ice cold.

"That's what *they* call it, not us. This is your new home. A sanctuary for the strange, weird, and unusual creatures society has discarded."

"I'm not a monster."

"You made your father's head explode, Will. It does not make you an ordinary human."

A tear fell down his cheek. "I wanted him to die."

Hannibal leaned in to touch his cheek. "We all want them to die, Will. The trick is to do it undetected," he whispered, smiling, "And that is what you'll learn here. How to be a....tolerable monster."

Will let out a long breath. "You....they said you....you reform them. The....the different ones."

Hannibal smiled and for the first time Will saw his fangs.

"I only teach them to be smarter, and other things. You'll get a full education here, Will, I promise you. Will you trust me?"

Will let out a long breath as he grabbed Hannibal's hand. "What other choice to do I have?"

Hannibal's eyes turned red.

"Here? The possibilities are endless, and the bodies are carefully buried I assure you."

Will smiled through his tears. "Is it pathetic that I feel safer for the first time in seventeen years with you than I ever did with my father?"

Hannibal growled. "It's not pathetic, Will. It's horrible and....they'll pay. They'll all pay for letting you suffer."

Will's heart skipped a beat.

"Ok."

Day 4: Zombie Apocalypse

It was strange, becoming a zombie.

Will hardly remembered his life before he did, bits and pieces of a past that he'd never be allowed to remember.

They never wanted them to remember the BEFORE time.

Because reformation was now.

Which was why he was being walked up onto a stage and talked up to the people in the rich snobs who wanted a pet monster.

"...and he's a fighter! Protect your house this one! Plus, he's pretty! You know, you can hardly tell at all! You could even..."

He zoned out, hungry now, and watched the crowd salivate with each passing second.

Will knew he was close to being incinerated soon.

A zombie's life after the apocalypse was not filled with much choice, but he'd never known life outside of a cage.

"SOLD for one thousand!"

Will turned, eyes wide, and saw a man standing up with a paddle. He nodded once as he sat and Will salivated at the sight of him.

His human.

His.

He had someone who wanted him.

Will couldn't take his eyes off the man in the front row, his checkered suit standing out above the rest, and he was in tears as he thought of a home. A real, true home.

He'd have a cage with a bed inside just like they'd been taught.

One meal a day - brain rations - and they'd patrol the yard at night for intruders.

Or they'd clean.

Or cook.

Something.

Anything.

He'd do anything for his human.

Will hardly did more than stare at his human as the others were auctioned and when the last was sold they took him in to be cleaned. He was the model zombie, barely breathing, and then got collared.

He was in tears when they took him out and his human was there with a frown on his face.

"Here you are, Sir."

The human glared and Will thought he'd done something wrong but he didn't say a word.

Be good.

Listen.

His human would fear him if he got upset.

He didn't want that.

Will kept his head down until he was led to a car. He got inside, breathing in the human's scent, and when he saw his human sit beside him he wanted to speak.

He wanted to say, 'Thank you'

But then his human just reached out take off his collar.

Will burst into tears, clutching it hard, and his human's eyes widened. "I'll be good! I...."

His human sighed and touched his cheek.

"They took all the fight out of you," he said, smiling sadly, "I....I'll put it back in, Will. I'll put it back in."

Will growled. "We're not supposed to fight."

"You're supposed to listen," Hannibal said softly, "And you will listen, won't you?"

"We're...."

His human reached back behind him and pulled up a small bag that he unzipped before he placed a wrapped plastic baggie on Will's lap.

Will growled. "It's....brains."

Hannibal smiled. "Yes, I do believe it is. Would you like a bite?"

He pushed it away. "I could hurt you! I....human...."

"Hannibal," his human said, placing his hand over Will's as he grabbed the bag, "And I'm ordering you to take a bite."

Will whined. "N....no."

Hannibal kept the baggie between them as he turned to buckle in. "I see. Well....it is not a short drive. We'll see long you last."

Will didn't take his eyes off the brains.

And only lasted twenty one minutes.

And then woke up in a tub of ice with Hannibal staring down at him.

"Experiment one was a failure. We'll have to slowly integrate it into your diet," he touched his cheek. "You'll be good for me, won't you?"

Will just stared up at him as he nodded. "Y....yes."

Hannibal smiled. "Welcome home, Will."

Day 5: Joker - Guardian

TW: implied and described child abuse and implied potential sexual abuse

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The only thing Will had left of his mother's was her bible.

It was white, scuffed, and had a shiny gold cross in the center that seemed oddly untouched but he put his fingerprints all over it so often there were smudges even after he wiped them off. He read it, cover to cover, unsure about the hidden meanings or truths within but there was one thing he clung to were angels.

God sent angels to protect some people.

But no one sent any to protect him.

The bruises were unmistakable yet went unnoticed by pretty much everyone. Not even his fellow students said a word in the showers after gym class or when he rolled up his long sleeves to itch a scratch.

No one wanted to notice him.

So, no one noticed.

He tried so hard to make his father not notice him anymore too, but it was a losing battle.

"You look just like her."

Will stared down at his plate, a thin microwave ‘turkey’ dinner and mushy stuffing smothered in gravy. “I’m sorry.”

The scratch of his father’s knife made him wince as he blinked back tears.

“Don’t fucking cry, boy. You’re not a fucking pussy. You look even more like her when you do that and you know it.”

Will didn’t touch his face as he let out a long breath, not saying a word, and chewed his bland fake turkey.

“Boys shouldn’t look so pretty.”

He shivered when his father touched his arm, the bruise there still healing, and looked at him.

There was something new in his father’s eyes.

Will felt the hair stand up on his arm as he pulled his hand away. “May I be excused?”

His father sneered. “No.”

Will spent twelve minutes finishing dinner after as his father kept touching: his arm, his hand, and even his shoulder once as he struggled not to wince. He was sixteen now, newly turned just a month ago, and yet he felt like a little boy suddenly.

The minute he was done he got up without being told not to, and took his father’s plate without a word to clean both. He waited for the door to swing open behind him and to be touched again but it didn’t happen.

His relief was palpable when he let the dishes dry and went to bed, locking his door.

He turned off the lights and stared at the light under the door as a shadow of feet went by.

Will heard a growl, shivering, and the shadow left but he frowned in the dark.

What was that?

He laid back, waiting, and closed his eyes tight.

Maybe he was just tired.

Will's hand fell to the side, dangling, and he felt something cold touch him.

Cold and….wet.

He froze.

He was dreaming.

He had to be dreaming.

Will went to pull his hand back and gasped when the cold wet thing grabbed hold of him. He cried out but then felt immense calm fill him as a voice came into his head.

I'm here.

Tears filled his eyes.

His angel.

It had to be his angel.

There were a million different types of angels, descriptions of them always changing, and maybe his was just not like the others. The pretty, perfect ones.

Just like him.

Will smiled in the dark and squeezed the cold wet hand.

“Hi.”

Hello

He fell asleep that night feeling calm and safe for the first time in his entire life.

His angel was watching over him.

Finally.

There was no reason to be scared anymore.

Day 6: Reality Show

tags: omegaverse, omega Hannibal, alpha Will

“Can you believe this?”

Will looked across the fire at Matt Brown, one of the many alphas who is competing in “Omega in an Alpha House” the reality show he’s somehow gotten himself stuck on. His best friend Bev put his name in for consideration while adding a video of him talking to his dogs in the kitchen and now here he was.

He really shouldn’t have come.

The show itself was trying to seem like they were subverting the norm when it came to the stereotypical omega that most people knew: meek, soft spoken, weak and yet every week when the twenty alphas – now down to just six – came together they still reverted to the neanderthal ‘tiny man must be omega’ sentiment.

And he hated it.

Will was the only one who’d ever fought against the removal of alphas like Peter Bernadone, Alana Bloom, and Adam Raki. All of whom happened to be the only decent alphas here. Now tonight he had to deal with the choice between two alphas who he didn’t think were anything but alphas: Tobias Budge and….Hannibal Lecter.

He felt his lip curl as he thought of Hannibal.

They’d spent so little time together, only a few private moments, and yet even know as he turned his gaze to the other alpha across the room he ached to be near him.

“Not really, no,” he sighed, “I don’t think either of them are the omega.”

Matt laughed. “Someone’s gotta be, right? And Lecter’s the one who likes to cook.”

Will glared at him. “Are you serious? So what? I like to cook.”

Matt’s smile faded. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” he snarled, “And it’s not like other guys here don’t. Tobias likes to play instruments and he talks about the flowers outside. Does that mean he’s an omega?”

“Well…”

He slammed his hand down on the coffee table and every eye in the room turned to him.

“LISTEN UP!” he yelled, standing, “YOU ALL NEED TO GET YOUR HEADS OUT OF YOUR ASSES WHEN IT COMES TO FIGURING THIS OUT BECAUSE AT THIS RATE THE OMEGA IS GONNA WIN AND I HONESTLY HOPE THEY DO!”

Will rushed out of the room to the balcony, needing air, and it did little to calm him.

A second later he heard, “Will,” he didn’t turn.

“Hannibal.”

Hannibal came to stand near him, and Will couldn’t help but turn to stare.

He wasn’t classically handsome, nor was he the soft featured type to hint he was an omega, but still Will felt his cock stir at the sight of him.

“I came to see if you were alright, that….was a rather bold outburst.”

Will blushed as he looked away, staring out at the large garden the mansion had, and felt Hannibal draw more near.

“It’s pissing me off. I…..I liked a lot of the alphas they voted off.”

“I see.”

“And…..honestly I meant what I said. I hope the omega wins. This show is ridiculous.”

Hannibal was even closer now, almost too close, and Will looked at him again only to freeze when he started to purr.

“H…Hannibal?”

He jumped back abruptly, shaking himself, and glared at Will. “I need to go.”

Will rushed to grab his arm and Hannibal snarled, his eyes flashing yellow.

“You’re….you’re the omega.”

Hannibal pushed him off hard. “Y…es.”

Will swallowed. “You…you’ve kept up for so long why…”

He hissed at Will. “Do not come near me again, Will. Not again.”

“What? I didn’t---”

Hannibal leapt from the balcony, much to his surprise, and took off into the house from down below where no one would smell him. Will headed inside, shaken, and barely heard what anyone said for the next hours of the ‘omega hunting party’ that they did before every elimination.

But then he heard Matt telling everyone to vote for Hannibal.

“….obviously him, right? Has to be.”

“….those fancy ass suits!”

He grew angry then, almost feral, and began to do the opposite for the last half until they were all summoned to the elimination room to cast their votes. It was a private voting, no one else in the room, and Will cast his vote for Tobias.

The end result?

3 votes for Tobias and 3 for Hannibal.

A tie.

So they had to have an event to break the tie.

Knife throwing.

It was a very unomegalike activity and every watched with bated breath as Hannibal made every single hit.

Tobias was eliminated.

Will's relief was palpable and he found himself lingering as Hannibal was congratulated. They locked eyes and he bit back a growl as Hannibal glared at him, rushing off from the garden, and he followed.

He knew he shouldn't.

It was a mistake.

But he rushed to follow Hannibal to his room and was pushed against the wall by Hannibal who hissed, "I told you to….stay away…." he said through gritted teeth, "I….I cannot…."

Will touched his cheek. "You don't have to hold back with me," he whispered, "Not me."

"They'll know."

"Who cares?"

Hannibal whined as he pushed him off, slipping into his room as he stared at Will from the crack of the door. "I do."

He closed the door and Will sighed.

This wasn't supposed to be a mating show.

It never had been.

And yet right now all he wanted to do was give Hannibal a mating gift.

If winning was so important to him?

He'd make him win.

By any means necessary.

Day 7: Farm/Ranch

The first time Hannibal saw the stand by the side of the road it was on a late-night drive back from murdering a very rude butcher and the perfect printed script of TRUFFLES

He was intrigued as most of the truffles he bought came from organic markets and cost quite a lot.

How had he never heard of this secret truffle stand?

Hannibal made certain to put down the stand's location as he drove home and cut up the rude butcher for meat to add to his larder. But he did not forget to go back the very next morning and pulled up with a frown.

The sign above the stand now read: FIGS.

He got out, confused, and walked up to see someone leaning down under the stand as he approached.

"I'll be with you in a second!"

Hannibal looked at the dates, holding one, and even sniffed.

"I wasn't aware figs ripened so early in the summer."

The man behind the stand stood up and Hannibal was struck by the sight of him.

Beautiful.

His plush brown curls framed his face even as sweat settled on them, and his frown somehow made him more attractive.

"These do," the man said, taking the fig from him almost angrily, "You just here to tell me my dates are bad or....?"

Hannibal frowned. "No, I....I'd like a barrel full, please. How much?"

The man looked him over and said, "Thirty five dollars."

Hannibal blinked. "How many pounds is that?"

"Three."

"I've bought a pound of figs for less at more expensive locations."

"Then go there," the man said, glaring, "I've got other people coming so I'm not exactly desperate for customers."

Hannibal looked around. "I see no one."

"Maybe they don't want to be around pretentious assholes."

"I imagine that your manners would also deter them, Mister...."

"Forty dollars," the man says coldly, "And if you keep on talking, I'll raise it to fifty."

Hannibal glared at him and picked up a barrel, reaching into his pocket for a fifty that he handed over angrily. "I can't imagine I'll be back."

"Thank god."

He left ready to put the horrible Fig stand worker at the top of his list of victims and yet as he drove away he couldn't help but remember the man's face.

And found himself returning there the very next morning.

The stand read CASSAVA and as he parked he noticed an older man leaving with a bag this time who did not seem to notice him.

The man behind the stand smirked as he walked up.

"I thought you weren't coming back."

"So did I," he said, staring at the table filled with cassava root, "I was unaware cassava could be grown outside of South America."

"This type can," the man said, eyes narrowing, "Are you the vegetable police?" he put his hands up and widened his eyes, "Officer, I promise I'm growing everything legal! I swear!"

Hannibal smiled. "No," he said, picking up one of the roots, "I....commend you for your green thumb."

The man blinked. "I....thanks."

"How much are these barrels then? Seventy five?"

The man blushed. "Um, twenty five."

Hannibal's smile widened. "A discount?"

"Shut up and just give me the money."

He did just that, but added another twenty."

"I said...."

"Consider it a tip, Mister....."

"Will," the man said, taking the money, "It's Will."

"Will. What surprise will you have for me tomorrow, Will?"

Will put the money into a metal box and closed it with a key, smiling still as he asked, "What would you like?"

Hannibal paused. "What would I like?"

He looked up and for a moment Hannibal thought his eyes looked red in the sunlight.

"Yeah," he said, licking his lips, "What you like to be surprised with tomorrow?"

Hannibal felt his heart skip a beat. "It wouldn't be a surprise then, would it?"

Will laughed, shaking his head, and in the distance Hannibal heard what sounded like canines barking.

"Do you have canine companions?"

Will smiled at him. "A few."

"I see, well....I suppose...."

"Truffles," Will said, as he stepped back, "Right? That's what you wanted?"

"I....."

Will grabbed his hand and Hannibal felt an odd tightness before he let go.

There in his palm was a truffle.

"I...."

Will sat back as two more customers pulled up and he found himself oddly shaken.

"I'm only open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, so tomorrow is the last time you'll get to be surprised, Mister...."

"Hannibal," he said, "Hannibal Lecter."

Will's eyes again looked oddly red as he whispered, "Hannibal."

"I'll see you tomorrow, Will."

Hannibal looked back several times and not once did Will's gaze not be centered on him.

And for the first time in a very long while he was surprised to be intrigued by something that didn't involve death.

Little did he know how wrong he was.

Day 8: Nomad

It took Will entirely too long to realize that someone was living in the woods behind his house.

The dogs' excessive barking never quite made him think anything bad, not really, as they barked at pretty much any wild animals as long as he wasn't out to tell them not to, and longer periods of wandering in the woods didn't worry him either. They were dogs, and dogs liked smelling wild animals and just chasing things. As long as they didn't get hurt he never saw the harm.

But when their barking started to become more insistent before he let them out than after and they stayed gone for longer and longer he grew worried.

This had been going on for almost a week now, the barking in and out of the house, and the long waits for them to return. So, Will decided to find out why. He walked out that night and whistled, like always, but not a sound came in response making him nervous.

"COME ON IN GUYS!" he yelled, whistling again as he walked out, "IT'S TIME TO—"

He saw a light in the distance and froze halfway across the yard before he ran back to get his shotgun. Will's hands were shaking as he checked to be sure it was loaded and walked back out to the dogs running his way. He ignored them, staring ahead where the light had been, and kept walking.

The dogs barked around him, sniffling and he smelled something in the air he shouldn't—-meat.

Will said, "GO HOME!" to the dogs who whined, doing as they were told, and headed into the woods hearing nothing but smelling meat and smoke.

"COME OUT NOW BEFORE I PUT A BULLET IN YOUR—"

A rustling sound made him pause, and a flashlight came into view illuminating a small tent as Will watched the zipper open. The man that came out was better put together than he would've expected, though he wore a white t-shirt he had on slacks not jeans. His hair was combed perfectly and styled as he put up his hands.

"I mean no harm."

Will cocked his gun. "You're trespassing," he spat, still shaking as he held the gun up, "I don't care if you mean no fucking harm this is my land and you…."

"I have been here for a week and went unnoticed," the man said, his accent now more prominent, and Will could barely see his face now that the flashlight only lit up the top of his head, "I've done you no wrong."

"I don't care," Will said, "Leave now before I…."

"I can pay you a thousand dollars a night," the man said, making him blink.

"Wait, what?"

He moved his hands down and Will was so confused he let the gun fall as the man's face came into view. The scar on his cheek made Will feel instantly bad for him, as it went from cheekbone to jaw.

"A thousand dollars a night," he repeated, "I have the money, and the means."

Will laughed. "What? If you have that kind of money…."

The dogs' whines made Will startle as they came up to greet the stranger, who leaned down to pet them one by one. "Hello my friends," he said, as the dogs seemed thrilled by his attention, "I have no more meat but I imagine your owner will be unhappy I've shared my meals with you."

"You….they like you."

He looked up. "Yes," he said, "They and I have an understanding. I do not normally enjoy canine companions but they are very well trained. I commend you."

Will scratched his chin. "The money."

"May I take out my phone?"

"Y…yeah."

He took out his phone and asked, "I take it you have online banking where I can transfer from your number?"

"Yeah."

"May I have it?"

Will wanted to say no but he was almost unable not to, giving out his number as he heard his phone make a sound a minute later. He pulled the phone out to look and saw a notification.

1,000.000 FROM HANNIBAL LECTER

He looked up. "You just….why are you out here?"

Hannibal smiled. “I enjoy moving from place to place and these woods spoke to me. I won’t be here long I assure you. I tend to wander, but for now….I hope my presence does not disturb you.”

Will just let out a long breath. “I….um….goodnight?”

Hannibal nodded. “Goodnight, Mister….”

“Graham,” he said, stepping closer to hold out his hand as Hannibal took it, “Will Graham.”

“Will,” Hannibal said, his voice almost a purr, “Goodnight, Will.”

Will left oddly blushing, confused and a little intrigued.

Just who was Hannibal Lecter?

And why was he paying a thousand dollars a night to sleep in Will’s woods in a tent?

Day 9: Accidental Baby Acquisition

TW: talk of suicide

The minute Will walked into Dr. Lecter's office he froze.

"Um…."

Dr. Lecter sat at his desk looking the least put together he'd ever seen him – shirt undone, sleeves rolled up, no suit coat, and his hair was almost expertly disheveled.

He was also feeding a baby in his arms.

"Hello, Will," he sighed, "Forgive me if I did not greet you at the door."

Will stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

"You could've canceled my appointment if you had relatives over, or….."

The sudden pain in Dr. Lecter's eyes gave him pause. "I….I suppose we know each other very little at the moment, but I….this child is currently my only living relative."

He stopped mid-step. "What?"

The baby made whiny sounds when he pulled the bottle away, and Will watched him expertly move the child to his shoulder, tapping its back. "It's been quite an ordeal, I….please sit."

Will sat in his usual seat, almost sad that Dr. Lecter didn't join him but stayed at his desk and frowned.

"How did…."

The burp that came was kind of cute, a small sound, and the words Dr. Lecter spoke to the – well his – child even more so as he put them back in the same position to continue.

He sighed staring down at the baby with a tired smile. "I…..I was informed that I was a father late last night by a…regretful…paramour. She came to me, demanding I take responsibility for a child I had no prior knowledge of, and then left them. I, of course, called the authorities and told them about her abandonment only to….be informed just this morning she committed suicide."

Will felt his chest tighten as he pushed the glasses up on his nose and could see the anger in Dr. Lecter's eyes. "Shit, I'm….sorry. Are you sure it's---"

"She is definitely my child," he said, looking up, "I had a test done this morning and…I have been added to her birth certificate."

He smiled sadly. "Well, that's….what's her name?"

“Imogen,” he said, looking down at her again, “Though I’ve taken to calling her ‘Kaciukas’ as she makes sounds that remind me of a small kitten I once had as a boy.”

Will smiled. “It means Kitten?”

Dr. Lecter smiled. “Yes.”

“You could always change her name? I mean….she can’t be more than…what….a few months?”

“Imogen is two months old, yes,” Dr. Lecter said softly, fixing her clothes as he took the bottle away again, “I….her name will be the only gift she has been given by her mother. I will not take it from her.”

Will leaned on his hand, watching him look down at her. “I think maybe she had another gift, Doctor L….”

“Hannibal,” Dr. Lecter said, smiling at him, “I think perhaps though we’ve only known each other for a short while…..we’re at the first name stage. Don’t you?”

He frowned. “I….I mean….you’ve been….”

“Would you like to hold her?”

Will blinked. “Me?”

Hannibal stood up, setting down the bottle, and Will’s heart started to pound as he walked across the room. “You and I are going to be seeing much of each other,” he said, as Will swallowed, “I suppose it’s best you become somewhat acquainted with Imogen.”

“I….”

He paused in front of Will to frown. “Unless you’re uncomfortable?”

Will laughed nervously and looked everywhere but at him. “If I say I am will you be offended?”

“No,” Hannibal said, “But I will ask why.”

Will looked at him again, then at Imogen who was sound asleep in his arms. She didn’t quite look much like her father, the dark hair that was almost curling framed her tiny head and the curve of her nose was almost a bit like Will’s own.

He smiled at her. “She’s beautiful.”

“Yes, now my question again. What makes you not wish to know her?”

Will blushed slightly and sighed as he took off his glasses, putting them on the table beside him. His hand shook as he touched her little hand curled into a fist. “I’m not the….fathering….type.”

“That’s good, because you are not her father.”

He smiled at him. “No, but….I don’t do well with kids.”

“How often have you been allowed to test that theory?”

Will sighed and let her tiny hand go, leaning back to look up at him from the chair. “Family parties, I guess? After I….I left home it didn’t matter but I….I avoided them.”

“Because you dislike children?”

He looked down, chest tight. “No,” he sighed, “I just….I don’t want to be a dad, you know? I….I’ve got all my issues.”

“As I’ve stated, Will,” Hannibal said softly, “You are not her father. Holding Imogen, even for a moment, does not make her your responsibility. It’s only a moment.”

Will felt tears sting the corner of his eyes. “I….” he looked up, smiling sadly as he held out his arms, “Ok.”

Hannibal gently put the baby in his arms and his hands shook as he took her, leaning back to stare down at the tiny bundle in his arms. The blanket she had on was light pink up close, and she had on a hat of the same color. He couldn’t see her clothes but guessed they matched.

“Hey there Kitten,” he joked, looking up to see Hannibal had moved to the chair he normally sat in and the look on his face was odd, “You ok? I’m not doing it wrong, am I?”

Hannibal shook his head, smiling now, and sat forward to watch him. “No,” he said, his voice strained, “You….you’re….perfect.”

Will blushed and looked down at Imogen, who was still asleep but wiggled a bit. “I think your Daddy must be very tired,” he teased, “Cuz there’s no way I’m doing this perfect. I’m about to drop you any second and he---”

Hannibal shot up. “Will---”

He grinned as he looked up again. “Kidding,” he said, as Hannibal sighed, falling back to his chair, “You’ve really got that nervous single dad thing down in less than….has it been twenty four hours?”

Hannibal smiled. “Seventeen hours, six minutes, and…” he pulled out his phone, “Four seconds currently. Though if you want to be technical I….I just four hours ago was put on her birth certificate.”

“Oh,” Will said, looking down again, “Imogen Lecter then?”

“Yes, I….I will not let her mother keep that from me as she did the first months of her life. I….I still am unsure why she did not tell me or chose to in the manner she did.”

He frowned. “Maybe she wanted money.”

“If she did then why wait the entire pregnancy? She could have forced me to get a test in utero. This entire ordeal feels….I do not like being so….”

Will looked up again. “Vulnerable?”

Hannibal shook his head. “Uncertain. There could be other factors in this,” he said, frowning, “Others involved or….” his lip curled, “I am her sole guardian as of right now but….her mother….”

“Who was she?”

He sighed. “A woman I occasionally commiserated with at the opera,” he said, not looking at Will, “I….I rarely get involved sexually but she….I thought she was….” he looked at Will, “She was lovely. It was the one time. Just the once, and I used protection. I know I did.”

Will frowned. “But she’s yours.”

“Absolutely.”

Will smiled down at Imogen. “You know,” he said, “She looks a little like me. Not that….” he laughed, shaking his head, “Maybe her mom was a long lost relative.”

“Or perhaps she just looked a bit like you.”

He blushed and touched Imogen’s cheek. “You hear that, Kitten?” he said, “I might not be good at this stuff but….I could be your ‘pretend’ daddy. You ever wanna run away and hang out with dogs and fish I’m your man.”

A little whine made his chest ache and she opened her eyes.

They were brown.

Just like Hannibal’s.

“There you are,” he said, smiling as she whined, “I thought she didn’t look much like you but she’s got your eyes.”

“Yes, I…..I am aware. It’s…Will.”

He looked up to see Hannibal’s pale face and shaking hands. “Hey, you ok?”

Hannibal sighed as he stood up to come over, holding out his hands. “I do believe we should go.”

Will grabbed his arm. “If you need to talk, or…..I stay up late,” he said, frowning, “I’m just a phone call away.”

The smile he got back made his heart skip a beat. “Thank you,” Hannibal said, as he took Imogen, “I….I will remember.”

“You want me to go?”

“I….I do believe we should all depart. I just….I’ve felt shaken all day about this even if….I’m learning it just….” he frowned at Will, “I suppose I wanted to see you. I….I have few acquaintances I could tell who would not judge me. I thought of you first.”

Will frowned. “Not Alana?”

“Alana,” Hannibal sighed, “Would want to interfere and I just…I want some time.”

“I’m sure. You need help with anything? You have…”

“I have all her things in the car,” Hannibal said, “Though I….I have more to get still and have felt…”

Will swallowed and took out his phone.

“It’s only eight,” he said, putting it back, “I can come with to go baby shopping? Two is better than one and I’m sure you’ve got a lot to do.”

Hannibal blinked. “You would….the canines?”

“They can wait a few hours,” Will said, “I’ve got time.”

Hannibal smiled. “Thank you, I…I would appreciate the help.”

Will nodded and together they got the baby into her car seat, walking out side by side.

“I’ll follow you?”

“Yes, of course.”

Will went to touch his glasses and froze.

“Oh, I forgot my glasses.”

Hannibal frowned. “I can---”

He shook his head and smiled. “I don’t need them,” he said, “Let’s go.”

Hannibal smiled. “Yes, let’s.”

Day 10: Enemies to Allies

TW: talk of child death - graphic - and also graphicish descriptions of child & adult death

Will woke with a growl, expecting chains, but was surprised to just be in a fancy looking bed.

His whole body ached, though he felt slightly better, and tried to get out of bed only to flop face first onto the floor when his limbs didn't work.

"You have been poisoned by silver," he heard, growling as the source's scent grew near, "It is rather ridiculous to think you could walk after mere hours, Wolf."

Will weakly thrashed out as he was lifted but didn't have strength much to do more than half heartedly poke, and when he was laid back in the bed he just glared up at his savior.

"Count," he said, eyes drooping, "You….you didn't….I thought you'd have drained me by now."

The Count, or as most called him, Count Lecter, just frowned as he fixed Will's pillows.

"Why would I do such a thing? You were injured and came…."

Will felt tears sting his eyes. "They killed them."

He turned to look at Will, eyes glowing red. "Yes, I know."

Will grabbed his arm, digging in his nails. "You knew? Did…."

The Count put a hand over Will's. "I know because you would not have come here if they hadn't," he said, "You despise me."

"You're a goddamn bl…."

"I may not like you much, Wolf," The Count said, frowning, "But I am not like the other covens. I do not hate werewolves on sight and I am my own man. I have no one to force me to…." he sighed as he stood, walking away, "It's no matter."

"It's no matter?" Will yelled, suddenly so angry all thought of sleep was gone, "THEY KILLED MY PACK! They….they were innocent children! I….I took them in, I….." he could hardly see through his tears, "They were all orphans and I…..I hardly…." he whined, nearly howling, "THOSE MONSTERS KILLED MY…"

The Count rushed over, his speed almost alarming, and he put his cold hand on Will's cheek.

"Your children," he hissed, as Will suddenly could only see him through a yellow haze, "They killed your children."

"They weren't---"

“You took those children in,” The Count said, his face filling with rage, “I….I may have no liked them on my property but I….they were innocent and I am sorry.”

Will howled, pushing him off, and put both hands on his face as he started to sob.

“Their….their heads they….”

The sudden whoosh made him move his hands and he was alone again. Will sighed, his eyes heavy, and the images of his pack returned making him whimper. That memory would never go away of finding them huddled together in fear missing all their heads that were stacked across the barn.

He’d been poisoned, the initial stab still stinging, and when he reached for his chest he froze when he saw something there that hadn’t been before.

A bite mark.

Will blushed.

“Oh.”

The Count had bitten him and perhaps even fed him---

Will could not taste blood on his tongue but that didn’t mean it wasn’t there. He had no idea how much time had passed. Perhaps he’d been changed against his will. The thought of even being part blood sucker taunting his wolf blood made him ill and he buried his face into the pillow as the memories flooded back.

His anguish made him howl, clawing at the pillows, and though he tried his best to fight sleep he was overtaken in his grief.

And woke with the sun.

Will stared up at the ceiling, tired, and froze when he caught a scent in the air.

Blood.

He turned and there, to his shock, was a pile of heads.

All very pale, very vampire, heads.

Will laughed, long and loud, and turned his head to see a note on the table beside the bed along with a covered bowl that had cooked meats inside. They had long since grown cold but it was a very welcome feast as he tried to sit up reading the note.

Will

The sight of his name made him pause.

He was unaware The Count even knew his name, neighbors that they were, and it made him oddly warm.

I hope these gifts give you some morning joy.

They begged for their lives.

I gave them the same mercy they gave your pups.

- Hannibal

“Hannibal,” Will repeated, smiling slightly as he looked at the pile again, some base instinct clawing at the sight, “Hmm.”

The gift didn’t bring back the children.

But----it had given him joy.

He ate his meats, rereading the note several times, and then laid back still almost smelling The Count in the air.

Hannibal.

His name was Hannibal, it seemed.

Will closed his eyes as he sighed.

“Hannibal.”

It wasn’t nearly as intimidating as ‘The Count’ but it was a passable name.

At least----for a vampire.

He’d tell him when he woke with the darkness.

And maybe give Hannibal some joy too.

Day 11: Retail Worker

“I have a new one up front,” Bev said, making Will look up from his burger, “Wants a cat.”

He sighed. “Another cat?”

Bev sat down beside him and set her bag down, pulling out a fry. “One of those stuffy ones that you like so much, looking for Maria.”

Will blinked. “Maria? She’s….”

“Our oldest,” Bev finished, taking out her nuggets and fries, “He says she reminds him of a cat he had as a kid.”

He smiled.

It was rare that someone wanted to adopt an elderly animal, and Maria, though she was a Siamese, was eleven. Cats rarely lived to her age, and at most she probably had maybe four good years left.

“Wait, he’s up there now?”

“Yeah.”

“With who?”

Bev froze.

“Bev….”

“Chilton---”

Will got up fast, cursed, and raced out of the employee lounge.

Pet Place was in the heart of the city, usually packed on Saturdays with lookie loos and people just here for last minute pet food. But he was the best at finding pets their person. Chilton, on the other hand, was miserable at it.

Will spotted the back of the man’s head as Chilton stood in front of him, no doubt spouting off why he needed any cat other than Maria, and Will glared as Chilton’s eyes widened.

“….and I really think a Bengal….”

He grabbed the clipboard out of Chilton’s hand and smiled at him angrily. “Frederick has to take another customer, Sir.”

“Will…”

“Goodbye Frederick.”

Chilton rushed off, glaring, and Will grinned as he turned to look at the “stuffy one” that Bev had known he hated.

And blinked.

The man who looked back at him was almost abnormally attractive, his hair slicked back, cheek bones so sharp you could cut them with a knife, and a smile that made him blush.

“Hello,” he said, “Will.”

Will swallowed. “Um, how….”

“Your fellow coworker just uttered it, and…” he looked down, “You’re wearing a nametag.”

Will blushed and looked down, pushing his glasses up on his nose. ‘Oh, yeah,” he said, frowning as he looked through the paperwork, “Mister….Lecter?”

“Doctor Hannibal Lecter.”

“Doctor,” Will said, smiling as he looked up, “You’re really here for Maria?”

Dr. Lecter frowned. “I….yes, but your coworker said she was rather….”

Will’s jaw tightened as he looked down again. “She’s the nicest cat I’ve ever met, honestly,” he said, “I felt so bad for her when her family just dumped her here and she’s been here for almost eighteen months. But I mean, she’s older, and she won’t have many years left.”

“Yes, I know. I….I only happened upon an ad for your store and there she was. It felt like….I was seeing Aldona again.”

Will heard his voice catch and he looked up to see tears in Dr. Lecter’s eyes. “Well,” he said, smiling, “I….I think she’d like to meet you, Dr. Lecter. I’ll take you to the snuggling room.”

“Hannibal,” Dr. Lecter said, making Will blink, “Call me Hannibal.”

Will blushed as he turned. “Let me show you the way, Hannibal.”

They walked toward the back, through two doors, and the snuggle room was unoccupied, much to Will’s relief. He pointed toward the chair. “If you just take a seat I’ll get her.”

“Of course.”

He left, racing to get Maria, and froze when he got to her cage only to find it empty. Will cursed.

“Chilton.”

Will rushed to the front and saw Adam at the counter. “Adam, where is Maria?”

“What?” Adam asked, ringing people up, “Why would I know that, Will? I’m front desk. I’m always….”

“Did you see Frederick come by here with a Siamese?”

Adam nodded. “Yes. Just a minute ago. I think he went to the back room.

Will shook his head. “That….” he took off, trying not to push customers, and went right through the back only to hear Chilton.

“…and he thinks he can get my sale but he’s….”

Will grabbed Chilton’s neck from behind, wrapping his arm around it, and Chilton coughed as he let Maria fall to the floor. “You fucking miserable….”

Chilton kicked back, and Will let him go as he picked up Maria.

“I’m gonna have you LOCKED UP!”

He frowned. “What? What do you mean, Fred? I….I just came back to get a cat?”

“You tried to kill me!”

Will backed away. “There’s no cameras in here, Fred,” he said, grinning, “Try to prove it.”

He turned away from him and tried not to laugh as he heard, “GRAHAM YOUR DAYS ARE….” just as the door shut behind him.

Will went back through the other doors, Maria purring at his shoulder, and opened the snuggling room to see Hannibal’s face light up.

“Here she is.”

Hannibal held out his arms and Will handed her over. Maria snuggled at his neck, rubbing, and Will leaned against the wall tearing up when Hannibal seemed to do the same.

“She….she’s very friendly.”

“I told you,” Will said, smiling, “She’s the only cat I ever pick up and bring in here,” he laughed, “And I hate cats.”

Hannibal smiled as he pet her. “She’s litter box trained?”

“Perfectly trained. She’s one of the few older ones who covers up her messes. Most of them just leave ‘em out.”

Hannibal moved her into his arms, holding Maria like a baby, and she licked at his hand.

“My mother,” he whispered, his voice shaking, “Had a Siamese cat named Aldona when I was a boy. She….she died when she was only five.”

“Oh,” Will said, frowning, “I….”

“My mother, father, and sister died the same year. There was a….men….came in to hurt us and I was the only survivor.”

Will felt a tear fall down his cheek. “Jesus Christ, I’m sorry.”

Hannibal didn’t look up as he pet Maria. “Aldona was always friendly with me and my mother only,” he said, as Maria’s eyes closed, “I….I held myself back from getting a pet for a very long time as it brought up nearly too many memories but this….this feels….”

“You can rename her,” Will said, making him look up, “People do it all the time. Maria was the name she came in with but….cats are smart. You….”

Hannibal smiled. “What would you name her?”

“Me?”

“Yes,” he asked, still petting, “As you’ve known her longer than I.”

“Um….I don’t know.”

“There is not one word, or event that sticks out to you after knowing her for nearly two years?”

Will wiped at his eyes and smiled. “She….she likes caviar,” he admitted, as a tear fell down his cheek, “I….I got some once, just because the docs said she might not make it and I wanted her to have something nice and she gobbled it right up. I called her a ‘little princess’ even if she’s…”

“Even the elderly can be princesses,” Hannibal said, smiling as he looked down at her, “Can’t they, Princess?”

Will’s heart skipped a beat. “You don’t have to….”

“I want to,” he said, still petting her, “Please draw up the paperwork for her adoption. I care little about the price.”

Will felt oddly upset thinking Maria, or Princess now, would be gone. “Ok, I’ll be right back.”

He left, wiping at his eyes, and bumped right into Chilton.

“Watch where…”

“I called Mr. Crawford,” Chilton hissed, “And he didn’t believe me.”

Will smiled. “Oh? I wonder why. I have…”

He grabbed Will's arm. "Don't underestimate me, Will. You really shouldn't. You have no idea what I'm capable of."

Will grabbed his arm in return and watched Chilton's eyes widen as he winced. "A lot less than I am."

He let go and went to print out the adoption papers, heading back to Hannibal, and found him on the floor with Princess who was rolling on her belly as he rubbed it.

"….get you a very comfortable bed, and as much caviar as you need."

"She's got you wrapped around her paw already."

Hannibal turned to smile. "Indeed. Are those…."

"Yeah," he said, "You filled out an application you just need…"

He grabbed the papers from Will, signing, and handed him a black card. "And if you could get her a collar and leash that would be very helpful. I don't want her to go missing before I've even brought her home."

"Oh, we have a box…"

Hannibal frowned. "Why would I trap her in another box when she's been in one for nearly two years? No, no, I….I'd like a leash and collar."

Will smiled. "Ok."

He left again, heading right for the leashes and collars where he found a white collar that looked like it had diamonds on it and a leash to match before ringing them up along with Princess herself. Will came back, receipt in hand, and found Princess in Hannibal's lap once more asleep.

"You wore her out."

"I suppose I did."

"She's all yours," Will said, handing him the papers, leash and collar, "All up to date with shots and fully spayed. All you might need is food and litter and a litter…."

"Can you help me find what I need?"

Will blinked. "Um, ok?"

"Thank you."

And that was how he spent the next two hours.

Helping spoil a cat.

It was, oddly fun.

Hannibal literally wanted everything Will told him he didn't need, right down to a raincoat for the cat who wouldn't go outside but might and even got her little socks in case her feet got cold. He also got her, a robotic litter box, the most expensive health monitoring litter they had, the most expensive senior cat food and treats, cat tree, and a bed.

The total ended up being almost fifteen hundred dollars.

"Wow."

Hannibal frowned as he held Princess in his arms. "Did I pay too much?"

"No, I….the prices here are a bit inflated but that wasn't it," he said, helping him carry everything out, "I've just never seen someone drop so much money on a cat that might not live…."

Hannibal put his hand on Will's arm. "You do not have to remind me how long I have with her," he said sadly, "I will make the most of it."

Will blinked back tears as he leaned down to pet Princess. "I'll miss you, old lady," he said, as she purred, "You be a good girl, ok? Maybe I'll see you again when your new dad goes on another spoil spree."

Princess licked his hands, and even his face making Will laugh. "Oh gross! I know where your mouth has been."

He looked at Hannibal who stared at him oddly. "Is everything…."

"Will, I've had a very nice time with you this afternoon. Would you…"

"GRAHAM!"

Will turned around fast. "Frederick, I'll be right back i---"

Frederick pushed him and Will stumbled, nearly falling into Hannibal's expensive car.

"You think you can push me around and get this big of a sale! You have another thing coming. You've always looked down on me and I've had…."

Chilton yelped when suddenly he was turned against the car as Hannibal put an arm around his neck in broad daylight.

"Keep your hands off of him," he growled, making Will's heart skip a beat, "You spineless, waste of flesh. If you ever are found to even…."

"S…stop," Will said, making Hannibal turn, "You've gotta get out of here before he calls the cops. You….it's on camera. Just go."

"Will…"

Chilton pushed him off and ran yelling toward the store as Will sighed.

“I apologize if I’ve made life more difficult for you. I just couldn’t have him treating you so terribly.”

Will felt tears fill his eyes. “I’m used to it, and he doesn’t scare me. I….where’s the cat?”

“I put her in the backseat, do not worry.”

Will sighed. “Oh, I….you really…”

Hannibal handed Will a card and pressed it against his palm. “If you need anything, or….if you’d like to see Princess again….please do not hesitate to call.”

Will blushed. “I….ok.”

“Goodbye, Will.”

Will stepped back as he got into the car, looking at Will one more time, and then took off fast. He sat there, hardly able to believe what just happened, and when he heard, “WILL!” he didn’t even turn as Bev ran up.

“Chilton said Mr. Stuffy attacked him? Seriously?”

“Yeah,” Will said, smiling, “Yeah, he did.”

“Jesus, are you…..Will, are you smiling?”

He blushed. “Bev….”

“Oh god, he did it for you,” she said, taking his hands, “WILL HAS A RICH CAT DAD BOYFRIEND!”

“I DO NOT!”

“YES YOU DO!”

Will pushed her off.

“I have to get back.”

“He’s so gonna buy you a dog,” she said, “Because you can’t get that adorable Cavalier King, and no one else is buying him. He’s gonna spent three grand on a dog, just watch.”

“Bev, STOP!”

“I WILL NOT!”

Will sighed as he got back to work, and Chilton avoided him for the rest of his shift. He was grateful when he got home, even if it was alone, and put Hannibal’s card up on the fridge but didn’t call.

The next morning Will had the best day of work he'd ever had because Frederick didn't show up.

He was thrilled, freely selling animals to everyone, and even when Mr. Crawford came in the afternoon to talk to Frederick and him he remarked how much happier Will seemed.

"Maybe Mr. Chilton is the problem."

"Just like everyone told you."

"Will…."

"We almost lost nearly two grand in sales yesterday because of him, Jack. He is the problem."

Mr. Crawford frowned. "Does everyone feel that way?"

"Just ask."

Everyone else agreed with Will, not that he had any doubt, and when he went out in the afternoon to have dinner he paused to go in because he saw something sticking out of the dumpster in the back.

Will frowned, poking the thing sticking out, and realized what it was.

A foot.

A shoe fell to the pavement and he froze, flipping open the lid, and there, spread eagle and torn open, was Frederick. Will didn't scream, or even get scared. He just looked at what had been done to him.

Frederick's heart had been torn out, and he'd been stuffed with roses. They were even falling out of his mouth.

Will had never seen something so beautiful.

He shook himself, racing inside, and yelled, "CALL 911!"

Nearly an hour later, after countless questioning, he was able to go home, and dragged himself up the stairs to freeze at his door.

There was a flower there.

Stuffed into a human heart.

Will looked around. There were cameras in his building, and yet he was almost sure whoever left this wouldn't be found on them. Will stopped to hide the gift, pushing both inside, and picked them up smiling wide.

He knew this was Frederick's heart.

Which meant Frederick had been killed for him.

Will felt tears fill his eyes, and the fear he knew he should feel wasn't there.

No.

If anything, he was….flattered.

Who'd have thought he would have two admirers in one day?

He wrapped the heart up in plastic wrap and put it in the freezer before he put the flower in water admiring it on the table.

Will looked at the flower again and took a picture to see what it was.

Sweet William.

He smiled, touching the petals, and felt his heart skip a beat.

This wasn't normal, not being scared, he knew.

And yet, right now, he was leaning more towards this admirer than Hannibal.

Wasn't that the craziest thing?

Day 12 - Joker - Wings

The introduction of magical creatures to open society had been met with both horror and wonder in the past five years. There were those who flocked to such creatures, eager to bed and wed them, while others formed groups demonizing them to the masses as abominations.

Hannibal was not one of the latter.

He had yet to bed one, but those he met in social situations he greeted warmly if they were polite and worth his attention. There were several among his colleagues - Frederick Chilton for one had revealed himself to be a gargoyle who could shift on command - and he did not find he cared what they did at all.

Then, of course, he walked into Jack Crawford's office and spotted a fairy at the desk.

Fairies were coveted creatures, few came into open society after what was now referred to as The Awakening, and the handful he'd come face to face with were demure, warm creatures.

This particular fairy was not.

The fairy turned to glare at him, eyes cold under spectacles, and Hannibal found himself almost enthralled by the sight of him.

Never before had he ever seen someone so beautiful.

"Will, I want to introduce—"

"He's a psychiatrist, Jack," Will said, his wings fluttering, "Why is he here?"

“Hannibal is here to make a profile.”

Will stared at him, no doubt reading his mind, and his angry hiss made the hair on Hannibal’s arm stand on end.

“DON’T LIE TO ME JACK!” he hissed, slamming his hands on the table as fairy dust came from them, “You have him here for me and you didn’t even *tell him* I was fae! This…..you know what? You don’t think I can figure this out when I literally can *read* minds then maybe Mr. Lecter can—”

“My apologies, Will, I had no idea you were unaware of my involvement.”

Will turned abruptly, eyes glowing, and they faded as his frown softened. “I know.”

“I can leave now if you’d like,” he said, meaning every word, “I would not want to make you uncomfortable.”

The sudden deflation of Will’s anger was almost endearing, and he pushed his glasses up on his nose as he looked away. “I….I just don’t like shrinks, that’s all. Or doctors.”

“Will, please,” Jack said, making Hannibal angry, “We need you on this.”

Will’s wings seemed to almost wither, and the light blue color of them went dull, almost gray.

“Fine,” he said, sitting down again, “I’ll stay.”

Hannibal found himself wanting to comfort him, perhaps even feed him something sweet as faeries were known to like, and he had to shake away the thoughts as Will blushed pretty pink, obviously hearing his thoughts.

He began to lay out his thoughts on the current case, a man who was going after magical creatures, and felt Will's eyes on him all the while.

The familiarity of faerie power was limited beyond what they told, and yet Will did not once cry out to Jack of his own mind's hidden secrets.

Could faeries read minds or was it more of a surface skimming?

Will's input was minimal, though Hannibal made certain to give him space to speak, and quite a few times he found himself touching Will in some way and was delighted when his wings began to shine a bit blue by the end.

"I'll see you both tomorrow morning."

"Ok, Jack."

They left together in the elevator, silent, and when the doors closed Will was the first to speak.

"You really need to work on hiding your thoughts," Will mumbled, scratching his neck, "I…..I'm pretty good at….picking stuff up when it's *that* loud."

Hannibal smiled. "I apologize, Will, I merely…."

"I don't need to be comforted," Will said softly, pushing his glasses up on his nose, "And I don't like sweet things. I….I'm forest fae."

He cocked his head. "I'm unfamiliar with the difference between faerie—-"

“*Fae*,” Will corrected with a sigh, “I prefer it.”

“Fae,” he repeated, “I apologize. I’m unfamiliar of the different types.”

“I….I like animals and….plants,” Will said softly, “I can pretty much grow anything or tame any kind of….”

“Beast?” he finished, making Will smile.

“Something like that.”

His wings now shone an even brighter blue, and did not flutter in anger. If anything they seemed to move slow, as if shy, and he wanted desperately to touch them.

Will grabbed his hand.

“I’m….I’m sorry, but I’m not interested.”

The pain in the instant rejection he tried to push off as the doors opened and yet he felt Will’s words like a knife in his chest.

“I see,” he said, stepping back, “I apologize if I’ve upset you. Have a good day.”

“Wait!”

He rushed off, anger rising, and was happy for the night air when it hit him. Will did not follow, thankfully, and he got in the car with thoughts that he would not want Will to hear.

Violent, bloody thoughts.

Hannibal drove off fast, nearly cutting off traffic, and kept on driving through the night. He had no idea where he was going, and yet when he finally was nearly out of gas he pulled into a gas station that seemed almost abandoned by the outside look.

The man at the counter barely looked up at him as he set down two twenties.

“Twenty on four.”

The man rang him up and Hannibal saw another man walk inside to glare his way.

He walked out the door, still restless, and filled up at the other man returned to glare at him some more doing the same.

His anger had faded now into melancholy, and he told himself he’d have to harden his mind better before he saw Will again. There was no way he’d lose any connection he could have to such a beautiful creature, even if their relationship was merely cordial.

He would not.

Hannibal got his receipt and slid into the driver’s seat before he pulled away from the rundown station turning back toward home. He drove nearly another fifteen minutes before he realized that he was being followed. It seemed like kismet, prey appearing like this, and he made sure to feign car trouble five minutes later, veering off as he parked to wait.

The car following him did not make his wait long.

It pulled up, and the man who’d glared so deeply looked friendly as he walked up.

Hannibal got out.

“Hey, fella,” the guy said, “Need some help?”

“Yes, please,” he lied, turning to pretend to look at his tires, “I believe…”

It happened so fast later he had to tell himself it wasn’t a dream come true.

One minute he felt a knock to his head, not hard enough to make him unconscious but enough to blur his vision, and when he turned to retaliate he heard the fluttering of wings.

And then the man’s head came clear off his body.

Hannibal fell back, confused, and there like a beautiful angel of death was Will.

He was covered in blood and holding the man’s head.

“Are you ok?”

Hannibal smiled. “Yes, I….”

Will knelt down to put his hand on Hannibal’s temple, and he felt a warmth fill him. “You’ll be ok,” he said, “You….you’ve gotta promise you won’t tell because….” he blinked. “Oh.”

“W….”

Will put both hands on his face. “You’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Hannibal frowned. “Yes, is that….”

Will’s wings shone bright blue, almost glowing, and he pushed his hand down harder as Hannibal’s vision blurred further.

“Shh,” he said, “Let’s get you home.”

Hannibal did not remember the drive, nor did he remember getting to bed, but he woke remembering Will.

Will had rescued him.

And he knew.

He knew.

The rejection perhaps had been premature?

Why else would such a perfect creature ready to fight justice leave him alive?

Day 13: Found Footage

The short film had been Will's idea.

Bev rolled her eyes when he brought it up, again, and Alana just paused mid-type on her laptop looking up at him with a frown.

"Will, you *know* what happened to those other people. The ones….*you know*."

Will *did* know, or at least he'd seen the footage that was spread all over the internet after Matt Brown, Georgia Madchen, and Peter Bernadone disappeared the summer of 1995. Everyone who was into true crime, and even those into horror, knew about them.

The Chesapeake Ripper wasn't a legend for nothing.

He'd always been fascinated by the legend, though rarely did anyone go into Chesapeake Woods after their disappearance. The footage, a grainy forty one minute glimpse into their ordeal, started out so happy with a bunch of young filmmakers just happy to make a movie. Then it devolves into angry infighting, crying, and eventually a confusing ending with screams and then---nothing.

Will didn't want to tell his friends he'd watched movie more times than was normal, dissecting every image, and the one moment that never left him was the brief glimpse of a face that should've haunted his nightmares.

The man had been there only a second but Will felt like he *knew* him.

He'd gone back to that moment, just in the middle of Georgia's chilling crying when she'd lost both Matt and Peter, and just couldn't shake it.

So, he wanted to make a movie of his own.

It took some convincing – a lot of convincing – but eventually he got what he wanted. Bev took her Dad's van and they'd loaded up on camera batteries before they drove the four hours away. The locals didn't want to talk much, but they were able to get into the library and searched for articles about The Ripper.

And Will was going through the old newspapers online when he froze on one.

LOCAL DOCTOR AWARDED

The picture was grainy, as the date was August 3, 1973.

But it was the same man. Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

"Will?"

He jumped, startled, and closed the screen as he smiled at Bev. "Hey. Ready to head out?"

Bev frowned. “You ok? I know Mrs. Snooty Library is letting us have this, but all I saw was the stuff about the other film and a few missing people. It’s all stuff we already knew, you know?

Will nodded, shaken, and got up fast. “Um, yeah. I guess it’s a dead end.”

“You sure you’re ok?”

He knew he should say something.

Anything.

But would they believe him?

Did *he* believe?

“Will?”

Will shook his head. “Sorry, I was daydreaming.”

Bev grabbed him around the shoulder and kissed his cheek. “You always get so into stuff like this. Careful, or I might think you’re a little *too* into this.”

Will laughed. “I’m not.”

“Well…”

Alana showed up holding a book with an odd look on her face. “Alana?”

“I think I found something.”

“What?”

She walked into the room they’d been directed to, and Bev closed the door before she set the book on the table beside the screens. “You know in that one part in the footage, you know where Matt is like yelling and saying he saw a man with deer antlers? Like some kinda monster?”

Will swallowed. “Um, yeah.”

Alana flipped a few pages and pointed. “I looked up local legends, and I don’t know why this has never been a part of the talk online but doesn’t this kinda sound like what he was talking about?”

The page said “Stag Man” and under it was a very well done photo of an all black creature that looked like a man with white eyes and antlers out of the top of its head. Will suddenly felt oddly warm and stepped back.

“Um, yeah I guess. I think we should go.”

“Will, you’re being weird. You sure you’re ok?”

He forced himself to smile and felt tears sting the corner of his eyes. “I…”

Will wanted to say a lot of things.

“…think we should go home.”

“…saw something in the footage and it looked like a man in the local paper.”

“…feel like I might be hallucinating again.”

Instead?

He just put his arms around them, letting Alana drop the book, and laughed. “I’m more than ok. We’re gonna figure this out. I….I just know it.”

Alana grinned. “Well, then let’s get out of here.”

Bev shook her head, pushing him off. “I swear, Graham, if I end up dying in those woods? I’m gonna haunt the fuck of out of you.”

Will felt his chest tighten as he smiled.

“I promise…no one’s haunting anyone,” he said, not quite sure he believed as he they walked out, the warm August heat hitting him like a slap in the face, “No one.”

Later, when he was the only one sitting in the tent and tears were running down his face as he heard Bev’s screams outside, he hoped like hell he was wrong.

Day 14: Princes and Princesses

“The Prince is coming back from university today.”

Will pauses in the midst of brushing the Queen’s mare, Henrietta, and frowns at his friend and fellow worker in the palace Beverly.

“Oh?”

She leans against the stable’s edge. “You’ve never seen him.”

He continues brushing. “No, I have not.”

“You’ve worked here nearly five years and you’ve never….I was here then, you know?” she says with a sigh, “When they…..when it happened. I wasn’t old enough yet to work in the kitchens but….I was here.”

Will feels his chest tighten.

The massacre.

The King, Queen, and Princess all were murdered by invading raiders in an attempt to take the throne. Will had still been with his father then, barely more than a boy, and the stories that had come of that night made it hard for him to sleep for weeks.

“He…..Lord Robertus and Lady Murasaki sent him away?”

“He refused to come back inside but he’s older now,” she says, shaking her head, “One and twenty. It’s his duty and….he has to find someone to join at his side before the coronation. It’s tradition for there to be two rulers, always has been.”

“A Queen?”

“The Prince has no one choice,” she says, blushing, “So I imagine in the coming weeks there will be many here trying to get his attention. You’ll have to deal with them all.”

Will sighs. “Oh.”

“But….”

A loud booming horn cuts through her words and they both startle running out of the barn just in time to see the flags in the distance.

The Prince was here.

Will stood there, stunned, and as the guard knights came up first he took their horses as Bev tried to help as best she could given her place in the kitchens. He’s cursing out Bobby now, a mess after skirting around in the taverns, and as a rather large dark stallion comes near he’s stunned by the one riding it.

They’re close in age, though the man looks little like him: his hair is ash blonde, eyes dark, and his expression is cold as he dismounts.

“Are you the only one here?”

Will blinks. “I….yes?”

The man scoffs. “That will change,” he says, pushing his stallion’s reins at Will, “When I am King,” the man, the prince Will realizes, stares at him closer now, “What is your name?”

Will swallows around the lump in his throat. “Will,” he bows, “Your Majesty.”

“Please do not call me that,” Prince Hannibal sighs, “I am no one’s Majesty.”

He looks up. “I’m sorry, P….”

The Prince holds out his gloved hand and Will takes it. “Hannibal,” he says, staring at Will warmer now, “I….I apologize for my starkness. I…” he looks back at the castle in the distance, “While I do have memories that were….filled with love of this place…..the worst of them is all I can remember.”

“I…..”

“Your Highness!”

Hannibal sighs. “I will request more help for you, Will,” he says, smiling, “Please take care of my Miele,” he rubs the stallion’s nose, “He was the last gift I received from my parents.”

“With my life, Hi—Hannibal.”

He nods and leaves Will alone, and his heart is beating wildly in his chest.

Whatever he is feeling it’s not something he’s known in his one and eighteen years, and….he knows he cannot continue with this folly.

The Prince will find a match soon.

And it won’t be him.

He only hopes whoever the Prince chooses is worthy.

Because he isn’t and never will be.

Day 15:

Hannibal sighed as he dragged the body into the woods, his limbs aching, and tossed it to the grass with little care. He wiped his brow, exhausted, and sat down leaning against the corpse.

“This was a mistake.”

His fertile time was near.

His cycles fluctuated as he grew older, a natural side effect he’d been told by his Uncle Robertus after his parents’ deaths, and the sudden ravenous hunger grabbed hold as he turned sniffing the air.

This murder had been planned for some time, painstakingly chosen, and he’d made certain to attack under the cover of darkness though his cloaking was strong enough it would have mattered little.

But now, his fertile hunger was about to make him sloppy.

Hannibal felt his tentacles brush up under his suit, pushing against the plastic, and he patted them.

“Shh…”

“Well, this is awkward.”

He froze as his head shot up and there was a human man holding a head.

Just a head.

The blood that dripped from it made his mouth water.

“I…I suppose it is.”

The man, who had on a mask, pulled it up and Hannibal was struck.

Beautiful.

He had brown, perfect curls, a light beard, perfect blue eyes, and looked like a Botticelli angel.

“Where is the rest?” he found himself asking, his voice shaking.

The man smiled. “Gone. I spent the last few hours cutting him up, but I wanted to leave the head here to…”

Hannibal blinked. “Are you…The Headless Horseman?”

The man blushed, looking away. “Um, yeah,” he said, “I…that’s me.”

“I….I admire your work. It’s…” he suddenly growled, and the horseman’s eyes widened.

“Did you just….growl?”

Hannibal backed away. “I….I do believe I should go.”

The horseman rushed at him then and he fought against his hold. “Hey, I just want…”

Hannibal threw him to the ground, screaming, and had him pinned under him in seconds as the beautiful killer’s fear hit his nostrils. “Oh god, what….what are you?”

His heart broke as he let him go, jumping up, and felt his facial tentacles on the outside of his head.

“I must---”

Hannibal grabbed the head as he ran, feeling rejection fill his very marrow, and barely made it to the car before he tore into the flesh of the horseman’s kill. He got little joy from it, tears filling his eyes, and ate every drop including the bones but blood was strewn across the entire interior of his Bentley in the end. He leaned against the steering wheel, shaking, and suddenly heard a heart beating. Hannibal looked up and there was the horseman, carrying the body he’d left, and he stood in front of Hannibal’s Bentley.

“You forgot something,” he said, trying to catch his breath.

He swallowed before he stepped out, still covered in blood, and the horseman frowned at the sight of him. “Oh god, are you hurt?”

Hannibal shook his head. “N…no. Thank you for your concern. I….”

The horseman smiled. “Oh, you *ate* him,” he said, laughing, “Good, honestly. He didn’t deserve a showing.”

He frowned. “You are not….you’re not running.”

“You could’ve killed me,” the horseman said, stepping closer as he put up his hands, “And you didn’t. So….why run? It’s kinda neat I found a….a monster? Alien?”

Hannibal blushed. “Alien. I….I am the last of my kind.”

“Ah,” Will said, scratching his cheek, “I should go, if you’re ok.”

His chest tightened. “Yes, I suppose I should….dispose of this.”

They both looked down and then up again.

The horseman smiled. “You want help? I have a shovel.”

Hannibal smiled back. “It would be much appreciated but there’s a cavern. I….was hoping to make s showing of my own there.”

“Oh? Are…wait…..*oh!* Ripper? Shit, you’re the Chesapeake Ripper!”

He blushed and felt his tentacles rise up further reaching out. “Y…yes.”

“That’s amazing,” the horseman said, “I…” he held out his hand, “Will,” he said, “Will Graham.”

Hannibal stared at his hand before he took it.

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter.”

Will laughed. “A doctor? Wow, that’s…..wow. Can I…watch you work, Doctor?”

Hannibal felt heat fill him at the way Will looked at him.

It would not be hard to seduce his new acquaintance, he was sure, and his instincts screamed suddenly for just that. Will would never have to know about the aftermath.

He purred and Will’s smile widened. “I’d be honored, *Will*.”

They began to walk together then, each taking an arm, and for a moment Hannibal thought of a life with this human. Then immediately squashed the idea.

This was a transaction.

He would get relief and a clutch.

Will would get sexual intercourse.

What was the worst that could happen?

Day 16: Joker - Everybody Lives

“You’re angry with me.”

Will stabbed his fork into the steak on his plate, not looking up, and the sound of laughter from the next room made him tear up but he stayed silent.

“You came along with us, Will,” Hannibal said, his voice tight, “You did not have to. No one made---”

He looked up coldly. “Do you honestly think I was going to just *not* come when you pulled out all the stops that night? That I….I wasn’t *terrified* you’d kill one or both of them if I didn’t?”

Hannibal frowned. “I had no intention of killing either of them.”

Will laughed “No? Let’s ask them, huh? Somehow you’ve brainwashed both of them into being happy as your new pets but I…I’m not going to be so easily swayed.”

The tightening of Hannibal’s jaw made him only angrier and though he knew the knife in his hand was too dull he thought for a moment of stabbing his hand with it.

“If you’d rather not stay, I understand. You can be on the first flight back to Baltimore and the three of us would be in the wind.”

Will’s chest tightened. “So you can pull Beverly into your bed like you did Alana? How do I know you’re not gonna slit both their throats when I…” his voice broke as tears came to his eyes, “I came along *for them* not you. I….I didn’t…”

Hannibal grabbed his hand and he flinched but made no move to push him away as their eyes met.

“No?” Hannibal asked, his voice shaking as his thumb rubbed Will’s hand, “You had not one moment where you wanted to come for yourself? To *be* yourself? It was all a sacrifice?” he smiled tightly, “How noble.”

“Let go.”

“Make me.”

Will felt tears fill his eyes. “Don’t.”

Hannibal leaned in further, hand brushing the bare skin of his forearms in the t-shirt he wore, and Will shivered. “Don’t *what*, Will? Don’t touch you? You can stop me at any time.”

“Hanni---”

“Hey, do you guys want to---”

He pulled his hand back and Will moved away, blushing as he looked up to see the reasons for his current location standing in the doorway of the elaborate mansion Hannibal had just plucked out of thin air for them to live in.

Abigal Hobbs….and Beverly Katz.

Both women looked at the two of them with dual deer in headlights expressions.

“We’re having dinner,” Hannibal said, “It’s quite rude to interrupt.”

Beverly paled as did Abigail, and she gripped Abigail’s arm in response. “We didn’t….sorry,” she said, and Will frowned, “We just wanted to know if you both wanted to watch a movie. Abby’s never seen Nightmare on Elm Street. It’s got Italian subtitles but it’s streaming so…I mean we don’t….”

Will got up, suddenly not hungry, and said, “Sure,” walking out with both of them soon following.

The mansion had so many spaces and rooms he found it easy to get lost in, but the sound of the giant TV made it easy to find.

“Are you ok?” Beverly asked, “You….”

He looked at her. “Are *you*?” he asked, shaking his head, “What is this? The last time I saw you, you…”

Beverly sighed. “It’s a long story.”

“I think I have time and so do you.”

She nodded.

“Not right now, ok?” she asked, looking at Abigail who looked worried, “Abby wants to watch this and---”

“May I join you?”

All three of them turned to see Hannibal just *there*, sans coat and tie wearing just his dress shirt and trousers. The sleeves were rolled up, and Will looked away feeling oddly flustered.

Stupid. You’re not---it’s not like that. Remember why you’re here.

He remembered, vividly, the shock of Abigail and Beverly coming out of nowhere the night they fled.

Beverly, who’d been missing for so long, and Abigail who he’d been so convinced was in pieces somewhere.

Both of them, alive and breathing.

And oddly on the side of the man who'd kidnapped and held them captives for so long.

Why?

"…right, Will?"

He pulled out of his thoughts and smiled at Abigail. "Um, sorry, I didn't hear you."

"This is supposed to be scary, right? Did it ever scare you?"

Will turned to look at the screen.

"Horror movies….haven't ever been my cup of tea."

"Too hard to ignore the urge to do the same as the killers on screen?"

Will didn't give Hannibal the satisfaction of a glare.

"No," he mumbled, "Too hard to ignore the shoddy writing and overcomplicated storylines when most of the time people just want the blood and gore of it. It's---"

"Shh!"

Will sighed and leaned back, barely paying attention, and felt a touch to his hand on the back of the couch. Hannibal stared at him, looking almost vulnerable, and again he didn't push him away.

Why didn't he wanna push him away?

He brushed his fingers to Hannibal's, feeling the touch go through him like a live wire, and just stared. That's what they did for the whole movie, just stared at each other, and when it was over he had to tear himself away while he blocked out whatever Abigail and Beverly were saying.

This felt like a mistake, running off with Hannibal, and yet here he was.

But he hadn't done it for himself.

No.

Will turned to see Abigail and Beverly laughing as they walked with them out of the living room, heading upstairs.

He wanted them both to live long, happy, lives.

If that meant he didn't?

Well….that was fine.

"Will."

Will didn’t turn on the stairs but he did stop, frozen, and felt Hannibal’s hand at his back.

“It’s late,” he said, his voice shaking, “I’m gonna go to bed.”

“You didn’t finish your dinner.”

“I don’t need---”

“Dessert then?” Hannibal asked, sounding almost desperate, “I made blackberry pie.”

Will turned to look at him in surprise. “How did you----I never told you that was my favorite.”

Hannibal smiled. “I have my ways,” he said, holding out his hand, “Come?”

He stared at the hand, freely given, and let out a long breath before he took his hand.

“Ok.”

This felt like another bad idea, alone time with Hannibal and no to hear them, but he didn’t let go.

Why?

He had no idea.

Day 17: Flower Shop

A/N: A full short story. I'm pretty sure it's the only one?

“Your boyfriend is here,” Bev said, standing in the doorway to the back room, and Will looked up with a blush from the bouquet he was in the middle of working on.

“I don’t have a boyfriend.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“No? Oh, then I’ll go tell Adam he can try his luck.”

Will barely got out, “Wait—” when the door closed and he shot up fast to run out in time to see the second of his two employees chatting up the man who had been on his mind for nearly a year.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Dr. Lecter had come in almost a year prior for a bouquet to give his secretary as a congratulations on her engagement, and Will had been struck by the sight of him. He was the most beautiful man Will had ever seen in his entire life – always looking amazing in the most elaborate expensive suits and ties and hair styled perfectly – and all he’d managed to do since that day was talk.

They always talked.

About everything.

Books.

Movies.

Flowers.

Hannibal loved flowers.

Will found himself almost jealous when Hannibal put in an order, his meticulous choices always ending up spectacular, and now when he saw him with Adam he knew it wasn’t *almost* jealous.

He was absolutely jealous, especially when Hannibal smiled at Adam, who reached out touch his tie.

Will had *never* touched his tie.

He froze, swallowing, and turned right back the way he'd came.

It served him right, really, if Adam ended up with Hannibal. Adam had a confidence Will would never have and he'd slept with more of their customers than Will Iiked but it wasn't his business to judge.

But now it was the one man *he* liked that Adam was gonna sleep with and it felt like his business.

He sat at his workstation and put his hands under his chin, stomach tightening.

"I'm such an idiot."

The door opened and Will sat up as Adam came into the room slapping down a piece of paper with a frown. "Your boyfriend was here," he said, looking oddly sour, "He wants this by three."

Will frowned. "What's wrong?"

Adam turned away. "He barely looked at me," he mumbled, "You know, I happen to be *bloody* gorgeous and that man didn't once look at me like a piece of meat. I'm highly offended."

He swallowed. "I saw him smile at you."

Adam looked over his shoulder. "Wait, you came? Beverly said she told you he was here but you never came out."

Will looked down again. "Just for a second," he mumbled, picking up some baby's breath for the bouquet, "But you looked like you…" he swallowed around the anger, "…were doing just fine."

"Will."

"I'm busy, Adam."

"I wasn't about to fuck your boyfriend, you do know that, yes?"

Will sighed. "He's not---"

Adam grabbed his arm, and he looked up to see him smiling. "All he did was talk about *you*," he said, "That smile wasn't for me, Darling, alright? He was talking about some boring book you told him about several days ago and that it was the *most beautiful prose he'd ever read* or some trite horribleness like that. I wanted to roll my eyes but I had to put on my happy face."

Will blinked. “Really?”

Adam groaned. “Yes, alright? Now, make the bouquet and then his, because he’s definitely expecting to see you in two hours.”

Will picked up the order.

“Pink roses, lilies, larkspur…” his chest tightened, “White snapdragons and lave…nder.”

He set the paper down.

“Will? What is it?”

Will felt his chest tighten. “It’s a romantic bouquet,” he said, voice shaking slightly, “It’s… he’s never…not once….gotten a romantic bouquet.”

Adam picked up the paper.

“You’re certain?”

“Yeah,” he said, swallowing around the lump in his throat, “Every flower in that order is **a….it** has some kind of romantic meaning,” he picked up some more baby’s breath as he tried to put it in the wedding bouquet he was working on, “I….can you just make it?”

“Will, he specifically wants *you* to make it.”

He sighed. “He won’t know.”

“Oh come off it,” Adam mumbled, “I make shit arrangements and so does Bev. We’re here to do the *other* stuff, not the magic you make back here. He’ll know. The man is obsessed with you.”

Will blushed as he glared at Adam. “Obviously not.”

“Will…”

“Fine,” he sighed, “I’ll do it, ok? Just….let me finish this.”

“Alright then, Darling,” Adam said, and Will waited for the sound of the door opening but then heard, “Will?”

He looked up to see Adam frowning. “Yeah?”

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry if he is giving them to someone else. Maybe he just likes to talk to you because you’re both boring and hot?”

Will laughed and threw some baby’s breath at him while Adam blew him a kiss, heading out backward to the front again.

He looked at the order and felt almost worse because he knew in the end it would turn out lovely. But this time he’d have to watch Hannibal leave with this arrangement and he’d know

it was for someone *really* special.

Will sighed.

“Like I had any chance.”

He finished the bouquet, the last of the order which was the bride’s, then told Adam as he went to the front in time to see the bride herself.

“Oh Will! I’m so glad you got done!”

“I’ll get it, Georgia.”

“Thank you!”

Will grabbed the long box with the smaller bridesmaids bouquets inside and Adam got the bride’s as Georgia said, “I really wanna peek but I won’t! I know Peter wants it to be surprise.”

He smiled. “I hope you like it.”

“I’m sure I will. Thank you!”

He watched her go, feeling almost worse now, and dragged his feet to the door while the piece of paper sat there mocking him.

“Stupid flowers.”

Will took his time then, even knowing he had only a few hours he rarely needs more than one to work on a Hannibal order. He tried to pretend that this one didn’t matter, that as the arrangement got prettier and prettier he wasn’t horribly upset, but failed as he put in the last rose just a few minutes shy of three.

He stared at the ‘love bouquet’ – because that’s what it was obviously – and heard the door open.

“Will?”

Will blinked back tears. “God, this is so stupid.”

“Oh, Will. I’m…”

“Please just take it out front?”

Bev grabbed the bouquet and sighed. “It’s really pretty.”

“I knew it would be.”

“Maybe I should just toss it on the ground when he gets here?”

Will laughed and looked up at her. “Bev….”

“He’s an ass if he doesn’t see how much you like him. I mean, I thought he liked you but doing this is kinda cruel.”

He sighed. “Is it ok if I head out? Got your keys?”

“We’re still open for a few hours,” she said, frowning, “What if someone wants a…”

“Say I’m sick, I don’t know,” he mumbled, grabbing his coat, “I can’t stay here.”

“Ok. Call me?”

“Yeah.”

Will headed out then, still in tears, and went right to his car where he kept his cool. He wasn’t gonna cry about this. It wasn’t a breakup, or really anything. Hannibal was a customer he thought was nice and good looking and obviously Hannibal liked his work he just kept coming back all the time. It was just a friendly relationship and he wanted to keep it that way.

He’d take a few days and be ok.

He would.

Will drove home an hour, the distance between him and the shop helping, and when he let out his dogs they greeted him warmly.

“Hey guys.”

He walked out to the back, staring out at the yard, and realized for the first time how lonely he was. His eyes filled with tears and he wiped them off. “Dammit.”

Will put his head in his hands.

Why couldn’t he get over this?

He had to get over this.

Will didn’t know how much time passed.

An hour?

Two?

Ten?

But when he got up with his pack it was dark, and he was hungry so he ordered a pizza.

The bed in the middle of his living room felt more inviting than ever as he laid down, feet up, and turned on the TV. He started to get a little tired, the emotional draining of this afternoon hadn’t helped, and he drifted a little but was woken by a knock at his door.

“COMING!”

Will felt his phone vibrate and he took it out only to pause.

He had fifty five text messages.

“What the…”

Another knock.

“I’m coming!”

He went to open the texts just as he opened the door for the pizza man.

And there, to his shock, was Hannibal Lecter.

Will blinked.

“Um, hi.”

Hannibal sighed. “I have been sitting outside your home for two hours. I thought perhaps you were ignoring me purposefully.”

“What?”

He reached over for something and to Will’s horror it was the love bouquet. “Oh god, what is that doing here?”

Hannibal frowned. “Will?”

“Did you not like it? You came all the way here…wait. How did you know where I lived?”

“Your coworker Beverly gave me your address.”

Will opened his texts.

Bev: GET DRESSED IN SOMETHING NICE YOUR BOYFRIEND IS COMING.

Bev: I SWEAR YOU HAD BETTER BE HOME HE’S DRIVING TO YOUR HOUSE.

Bev: WILL GRAHAM ANSWER YOUR DAMN PHONE!

He looked up. “What are you doing here?”

Hannibal looked at the flowers. “You don’t like them?”

“What?”

“I specifically picked them out for their meaning, and I think they look quite beautiful. If you’d rather not keep them, I under—”

Will’s heart skipped a beat. “Wait, wait, wait….these….they were for me?”

Hannibal's face lit up as he smiled. "Yes, of course they are, Will. I…." he stepped closer as Will moved back, tearing up, "I have spent thousands of dollars in your flowers shop over nearly a year in order to see you and finally could not hold in my desperate affection for you and you alone. I….Beverly and Adam both assured me that you would be amenable to an overture such as this but if you're not interested---"

Will pulled on his tie, smashing their mouths together, and Hannibal lifted him up with ease as they headed into his house. He was shaking as they fell onto the bed, tears filling his eyes, and when they broke for breath both were smiling.

"I take that as a yes."

He laughed. "A very *amenable* yes," he said, still holding his tie, "I….god, you drive me crazy. I'm…."

Hannibal kissed him softly. "As am I."

They kissed again, slower this time, and then….just kept on kissing.

In the morning the flowers, fallen on the floor, were lovingly picked up and put in a vase that Will kept by his bedside until they wilted a week later.

By then there were two more.

Though a few months later he was given an unfortunate bouquet as a surprise that was made by Adam he hated but pretended to love.

But he did love the ring.

And definitely said, "Yes."

Day 18: Space Travel

Will landed the ship with some difficulty, shaking still from the meteor shower he'd just gone through.

His lup Winston yipped as he stood on uneasy feet to let the golden pet out of his cage, laughing as his fur went from dark purple in fear as Winston attempted to crawl under his suit knocking him over.

"Hey, hey," he said, petting him, "We're ok. We….we just have to get this stuff into the food center and have someone look over the ship, ok?"

Winston yipped again, peeking out, and he pet him again as he said, "Leash" his suit making the leash appear from his hand attaching easily.

"C'mon, Winston."

He walked out only to pause when the air was murkier than it should be.

"Air filters," he said, and clear round helmets appeared on both him and Winston as the space where the food center should've been opened up to something else entirely.

A castle.

Will blinked. "Oh shit," he cursed, stepping back, "Where are we?" he asked the suit, as Winston yipped again.

"You are on the planet Canbal, home to the Cannibalians, who…"

"Fucking *eat* people?" he yelled, turning to run, "Why the hell did we land here?"

"The statistic probability of landing safely on the planet Roma was quite small, and Canbal —"

All at once a loud noise made Will fall to his knees and the air filters failed as he started to cough, vision blurring when a goddamn horde of men came at him. He struggled to breathe, hearing Winston whine, and croaked out, "He's…..my lup….don't….let him…"

And he fell into darkness.

He woke up with a gasp, shirtless, and blinked as he stared around an opulent room.

"Um…"

Winston's yip came and he let out a sob when his lup hopped onto the bed he was laying on.

"Oh, thank god," he said, hugging him, "I thought…"

A tingling in his head made Will frown and he reached out to touch as he heard, '*He wakes'* clearly in his mind.

"What the…"

The door opened to his left and he blinked as a very tall, very pale being walked into the room and bowed. The being's hair was so long it came down past his shoulders and his ears were pointed.

"A thousand apologies for the trauma you experienced, *Mylimasis*," the being said, their voice giving Will that same tingle, "Those involved have all been murdered and cut up for your meal to come."

Will binked. "Um, I…..what? You didn't have to kill anyone! And I don't---"

The being looked up and Will blushed when he saw the being's face.

They looked almost unreal, their cheekbones so sharp and prominent they should've been off putting but it only added to their attractiveness.

"I….who are you? What did….where am I?"

The smile he got showed off the Cannibalian's teeth – razor sharp – and again what should've terrified him only made him blush harder.

"I am Han'b'al, leader and heir of Canbal," he said, crawling over to the edge of the bed to take Will's hand in his, "You are in my dwelling, the Tower of Lect."

Will swallowed as Winston came over to Han'b'al and the soft petting he got made Will's heart skip a beat.

"Why am I here and not dead?"

Han'b'al turned to frown at him. "You are my mate, Will," he said, "I have seen you in my dreams and I….I felt your arrival nearly too late," he said, kissing Will's hand as his eyes suddenly turned red, "I had to have the guards killed for nearly losing you forever. I…." he put Will's hand on his cheek, "You are my destined one, my Beloved, and together we will bring about a new age of Canbal, our children following in our steps to make the planet a utopia for all."

Will felt that tingling again, spreading through him, and pulled his hand away. "I….I'm sorry, but you're wrong. I'm not…." he tried to get up and fell face first into Han'b'al's arms, staring up at him.

"You are still too weak," Han'b'al said, lifting him with such ease it was terrifying even with how gentle he was being, "Your body nearly shut down and….you're taking well to the influx of molecules we had to inject into your system."

He felt tears fill his eyes. "The what?"

Han’b’al frowned, taking his hands again. “You are unhappy.”

“Obviously!” he yelled, shaking, “You just told me you put something into me and messed with my body changing me into who knows what!”

Han’b’al’s eyes turned red again as he growled, standing abruptly. “My healers *saved* your life, Will. You can now breathe our air, and soon you will be able to carry my spawn when you’ve adjusted. I….” he shook his head, “This is not what I have been seeing in my dreams. You were *grateful* in them. You were….” his eyes filled with red tears that streamed down his face, “You…you *glowed* with happiness to be carrying, you…”

Will tried to move but couldn’t, hitting the bed that wiggled under him, and spat, “I’d rather be *dead* than turned into some incubator for a creature who *fucking eats people*! Now I can’t even leave! I have a life! I….”

Han’b’al suddenly fled, his growl reverberating off the walls, and Will screamed, “I WILL NEVER BE YOURS!” before the doors closed.

He rolled, tears streaming down his face, and started shaking as he heard Winston’s whiny yip but didn’t look up.

This was a nightmare.

An absolute nightmare.

And there was nothing he could do.

The tingle in his head suddenly grew sharp and he cried out, hands coming to his head, and heard, ‘*Rest’* his body growing heavy instantly as he struggled to keep his eyes open.

“Oh fuck y---”

Will fell into darkness again, knowing Han’b’al had more powers than he’d let on, and imagined a life being mind controlled by a super tall cannibalistic alien.

He would’ve been better off dead.

Day 19: Spies

Will sipped his wine, eyes scanning the room, and heard a voice in his ear.

"See him yet?"

"Negative," he whispered, sipping again, "You're sure he's here?"

"Absolutely. The Inferno Club is his favorite place in the city and it's exclusive. You know these fucks love feeling important."

He sighed.

"Absolutely."

Will felt anger fill him knowing what he was going to have to see, not do, but it was all for a good cause.

Men like Mason Verger deserved to die, and he'd been evading the end of a gun for his entire life. All it took was working with known enemies of the United States government for him to finally be close to getting what was coming to him.

He sipped again, almost shaking with anticipation, and the leather pants and mesh top he had on chafed as he moved.

"You sure about these clothes?"

"Absolutely. He likes the pretty boys and you….Graham….look awful pretty."

He smiled.

"Flatterer."

Bev laughed in his ear and Will almost missed a spot of color go by, turning to blink as a man came into the room in a suit. He looked out of place in a club like this, though there were men of means here most were casual and this man was absolutely not.

"Bev…"

"HANNIBAL!" he heard, turning again in time to see Mason Verger, his target, walk into the club's lower half, embracing this stranger.

Will heard muffled voices, and tried to get closer but missed Mason's entourage being led off to god knew where.

"Fuck."

"Who was that?"

“You tell me.”

“On it.”

He finished his drink, lip curled, and tried not to run but needed to be close. The group went then to a door he hadn’t even noticed coming in and disappeared out of sight.

“Waiting on that name.”

“I’m trying. I can’t find him.”

“What?”

“Hey there.”

Will turned to see a dark haired man at his left and glared at him. “Not interested.”

“I’ve got---”

“Fuck….off.”

The man scoffed and left, making Will stick a hand in his front pocket where he’d put the pill. Just a second. That’s all he’d needed. Just one damn second.

“Name?”

“Nothing. I’ve got absolutely nothing.”

Will blinked.

“Oh shit.”

“Will?”

He walked up to the door, hoping like hell he was wrong, and the guards there stopped him.

“Private area.”

Will smirked, feeling the fake piercing on his lip as he bit it. “I know, Darlin’,” he said, his accent exaggerated, “I was hopin’ you’d make an exception. I’d love to get in there.”

“Priv…”

A cough made him turn and an older man pushed him aside, showing a card.

Will shook his head, ready to leave, when a scream filled the room.

He turned and froze.

The entire room inside was covered in blood.

There were bodies everywhere, and Will rushed up to see Mason Verger hanging from the ceiling.

"Shit. Is he there? Do you see him?"

Will scanned the room, hoping his glasses picked everything up, and didn't see the suit that had gotten his attention.

"Do you?"

"No."

He walked up the stairs, shaking as much as he knew he should be, and was let through as he let tears fall down his face to act the part. Will heaved when he was outside, bent over, and said, "Contract?"

"Obviously. But by who?"

"You tell me."

"He didn't show up on any of the---"

"Are you well?"

Will looked up in surprise as he felt a hand on his arm and froze.

It was him.

The man in the suit.

He tried not to look shocked and just stepped back, teary eyed. "Someone killed people in there," he said, his voice shaking, "It was….I thought I might throw up."

The man frowned. "How awful," he said, and Will noticed his suit was gone replaced by a casual black shirt and matching trousers, "I'm certain the authorities will be here soon or emergency services."

"I just…" he heaved, shaking, and fell into him, not surprised when he was caught in a strong embrace, "I need to get out of here. I…."

"Let me help you."

Will sniffled, letting himself be led, and turned them to the back of the club hoping no one noticed in the fray.

"Often one just needs to be alone and out of danger in order to---"

He struck, turning the man and pinning him, and the smile he got made him glare back.

"Who are you?" he hissed, "How did you get out here? Who are you working for?"

The assassin smiled. “What a pleasant surprise,” he said, not even fighting him off, “My superiors told me the United States had an eye on Mr. Verger but I did not suspect their man would come dressed like….you.”

Will pressed his elbow into the man’s neck.

“TELL ME!”

He gripped Will’s arm softly, barely flinching. “No.”

“What do you mean, no? You….”

It happened so fast he barely had time to even blink. One minute he had the upper hand and the next he didn’t, flipped face first against the wall with a knife to his throat.

“I have no wish to kill you,” the killer whispered, his voice almost a purr, “You’re very handsome and it would be a waste. I….I admire your skill. What is your name?”

“I’m not gonna tell you my---”

He pressed the knife tighter and Will flinched.

“Tell me or I may have to take you, and….I know I could make you talk. I think you know it too.”

Tears stung his eyes and they weren’t fake this time.

“Fuck off.”

An arm came around his throat, the knife gone, and he froze when he felt a hard cock against his ass.

“You getting off on this? You….”

He pressed his lips to Will’s ear. “Yes,” he whispered, licking his neck, “As I’ve said, American….I find you quite handsome and…skilled. I admire beauty and skill above all. I….”

Will shuddered. “Why can’t I hear my handler?”

“I have a signal jammer,” he said, grinding against Will’s ass again, “For all they know, you’re dead.”

“I….”

“Your name?”

He felt a tear fall down his cheek and felt his cock stir.

This wasn’t like him.

Getting off on this.

Or….letting himself be compromised.

It wasn't like him at all.

"If the signal is jammed," he said, his voice shaking, "Does that mean *your people* don't hear me either?"

"Yes."

Will closed his eyes. "How can I trust you?"

"You can't."

"Will," he said, as he felt a kiss against the back of his neck, "Yours?"

"Hannibal."

The sudden tightening of the hand at his neck made him struggle, and Hannibal turned to stare as he said, "You…..you…."

"Shh," Hannibal whispered, "I have no intention of killing you, Will. I find you very, very interesting."

His vision blurred, and he passed out so fast he felt like an amateur.

And when he opened his eyes there was Bev looking concerned.

"I'm alive."

"Yeah," she said, frowning, "And I have no idea how."

"What do…."

Bev turned his head and Will looked at a screen.

There was Hannibal, his face clear as day, and next to his name was only, "Ripper."

"Who is he?"

"He's got no ties," she said, "But he's hired by a lot of foreign governments and always, always gets his man. I had to unlock this file. It was sealed. Even our people don't want him found."

Will didn't look away.

The Ripper was untouchable.

A ghost.

But for some reason, he'd told Will his real name and let him live.

Why?

He had no idea.

But…he was going to find out.

Day 20: Crossover/Fusion

TW: implied child abuse, implied sexual abuse, murder

John Graham died at one fifteen a.m.

But no one knew he was dead other than his twin sons: Will and Adam.

Will remembers the feeling of his father's blood on his hands, the release of so much pain, and can still hear the screams that came from his brother as he stabbed alongside him.

Adam was mute for days after even as he helps Will bury the body, and when the police come two weeks later asking after him, they both just say, "He never came home."

It's easier than the truth.

He refuses to leave his twin's side when they're taken to the children's home, and they even share a bed though they're far too old to need it. Adam was born two minutes before he was, the older of the two of them, but Will's always felt protective of his sibling who struggles so much more than him.

They get adopted a year later by Clancy and Karen Smith, a lovely couple who take them to a farm where Adam thrives.

The two of them have their first birthday celebration ever there, sixteen candles, and they get enrolled into Wolf Trap High School four months later for their junior year.

It's there that they learn about the Lecters.

Hannibal, the oldest, and his twin brother Nigel.

The two are orphans, just like Will and Adam, but did not kill their parents. It was robbers in the night who got them, and the two of them live with relatives but have been the only twins at Wolf Trap High until now.

Adam stays close to Will when they first hear about it, memories returning he's sure, and he drags him to the boys' bathroom where the just hug each other tightly as he whispers, "It's over," repeatedly as Adam settles.

It's been better not to talk about Dad.

Adam doesn't need it, and the nightmares are gone.

Why did these other twins have to bring everything back to the surface?

Will is in tears when they head to separate classes, and he barely makes it to gym where he bumps into someone hard falling onto his ass.

“Hey, watch where---”

He looks up to see Hannibal Lecter, the oldest twin, staring down at him with an outstretched arm.

“My apologies. I….had hoped to meet you in better circumstances.”

Will blinks, righting himself before he stands to glare at him angrily. “I don’t accept your apology.”

“I….I’m sorry?”

He turns around and repeats, “I don’t accept your apology! Leave me alone!”

Will actively avoids Lecter throughout gym class and when he sees him again at lunch hides in the bathroom instead.

Adam texts him repeatedly, worried, and Will just says, “I’m in the bathroom from earlier.”

“Why?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

They don’t see each other again until the end of the day when Will goes to pick up Adam only to freeze in the doorway.

Adam is talking to Nigel, the other Lecter twin, and he’s smiling.

“Oh fuck no.”

Will rushes over and grabs his arm. “Come on, we’re going.”

“Wait, Will, I was---”

“No, we’re going.”

He pulls Adam out of the classroom, ignoring his sniffles, and when they start to walk home, he looks back making sure Nigel didn’t follow.

“I was….why did you do that?”

“That was the….the other Lecter.”

Adam sniffles and pulls his arm back. “Yes, I know,” he says, “I…..we talked all during Biology because we were lab partners. Nigel is…” Adam blushes, “Very nice.”

“Adam….”

He looks at Will. “I didn’t tell him anything.”

“I didn’t….”

“I want to make friends, Will,” Adam mumbles, “You know how difficult that’s always been for me.”

Will sighs. “I know but---”

Adam hugs himself as he starts to walk again. “I…..I still….I don’t think I’d ever….he’s handsome but….not after…..I…..that doesn’t seem like I could do that. But we could be friends.”

Will feels tears fill his eyes. “What about me?”

Adam stops to frown at him. “Will.”

He wipes his eyes and sniffles. “We’ve been best friends since the womb, Adam,” he whispers, his voice shaking, “And we share everything. If….you can’t leave me behind.”

“I’d never do that!”

“Then what was that with Nigel! You just met him!”

“He was very nice!”

Will grabs his hands and pulls Adam into a hug, tears falling down his face. “So was Dad, once,” he says, then instantly regrets it when Adam starts to shake, “Ad---”

Adam buries his face into Will’s neck. “I still…I…..I’m sorry, Will.”

“Hey, I didn’t….”

Adam pulls back and shakes his head. “I won’t talk to Nigel anymore.”

“Adam….”

“Please let’s not talk about this.”

“Ok.”

They walk home silently and get to the city bus where they’ll be taken halfway home where Clancy will pick them up. Adam lays his head on Will’s shoulder, face still wet, and Will feels like a monster for making him cry.

He knows he can’t keep Adam by his side forever.

But for now, they’re all they have.

And he’s going to protect him.

Fuck the Lecters.

They might not be Grahams anymore but they’re brothers.

Nothing else matters but that.

Day 21: Absurd Tragedy

The day Will woke up with antlers felt like every other.

He rolled over, hearing the dogs bark in the distance, and looked at the clock by his bed.

“Five thirty? Are you serious?” he groaned, sitting up, and yawned as he ran fingers through his hair.

And froze.

“W…”

He felt them - hard knots on both sides of his head - and nearly fell out of bed running to the bathroom to stare in the mirror.

There they were: two small lumps right there in plain sight that felt almost foreboding without looking like anything he’d ever seen or heard of.

Tears filled his eyes and he went to rub them, hoping this was a dream.

No.

The lumps were still there.

The dogs barked again and he yelled, “IN A MINUTE!” as a tear fell down his face. He left the bathroom wearing only boxers and opened the door for the dogs before he grabbed his

phone.

Dr. Lecter answered on the first ring.

“Will? What’s wrong? Has there….”

“I…” his voice broke, “I need you to come out here.”

Silence.

“I wouldn’t ask but I need a doctor to look at me, and I….I feel like I can’t go to a regular doctor. I feel….*shit*,” he sniffled, “Something’s wrong with me and I don’t trust….”

“I will be there as soon as I can.”

“T…thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I will see you shortly.”

The call ended and Will called Jack, feigning ill. Jack didn’t seem to believe him but couldn’t argue, and the school believed him mostly because he hardly ever got sick or called off.

Will went outside, wiping his eyes, and saw the dogs playing as he stepped down still only clad in boxer shorts.

And suddenly an urge to join them.

He ran over, got on all fours, and began to chase his dogs around the yard. They were thrilled, barking happily, and he ended up covered in dirt but was laughing when he heard, “You do not look ill.”

Will froze and turned to see Hannibal standing there smiling.

“I….you can’t see them?”

Hannibal frowned. “Them?”

He got up, realizing he was a mess, and blushed slightly. “I’m all dirty, I….I’ll shower. God, you really didn’t wanna see me like this, I’m sure.”

Hannibal eyed him up and down. “I have no complaints.”

Will laughed and Hannibal smiled. “I….I’ve gotta….can you let the dogs in?”

“Of course.”

“I….how did you get inside?”

“The door was open.”

“Oh. I’ll be right back.”

Will went into the house, heading right to the shower, and washed all the dirt away though he couldn’t help but smile as he thought of playing with the dogs earlier. It felt nice, running like that, letting the earth touch his skin, and when he felt a sudden warmth fill him just before he touched his hair he froze.

“Oh no.”

They were *bigger*.

He got out of the shower, hurried to wrap a towel around himself, and got out into the hallway only for Hannibal to hand him clothes.

“Um….thanks.”

Hannibal blinked. “You….you….” he reached up to touch Will’s horns, making Will shiver, “You seem to be….are they horns?”

Will felt tears fill his eyes. “I….I think so.”

Hannibal frowned. “I see.”

“You’re not screaming.”

“You have not grown into a hideous monster, Will, you’ve grown horns. I see no reason to scream.”

Will let out a long breath. “I….tell me you know what this is.”

“I’m afraid you are the first patient I’ve ever had that’s grown horns.”

He sighed. “I….”

“Get dressed,” Hannibal said, gently pushing against the clothes in Will’s hands, “We will talk over breakfast.”

“I don’t….”

“I can make you something, I’m sure. Please.”

Will nodded and went back into the bathroom to change, unable to stop touching his horns, and when he got out he smelled bacon.

“I…I didn’t know I had bacon.”

The dogs came up to him, looking oddly clean, and Hannibal turned at the stove to smile.

“You did, and….several eggs along with steak. I would have brought you better meat had I known it was not as dire as….”

“I’m growing *horns*,” Will said, “How is that not *dire* news?”

Hannibal turned a piece of bacon with care, not looking up. “Is it painful?”

“What?”

“Is the growth painful?”

“I….” he swallowed around a lump in his throat, reaching up to touch the horns, “No.”

“Then it’s not dire. It’s just unusual and….rather unconventional. Perhaps with time you can even mask them, so no one knows.”

“What? Why….I was gonna find a doctor and remove them if I can. I….”

Hannibal turned to glare at him. “Will you remove your arms and legs as well?”

Will laughed. “What?”

Hannibal set down the fork he’d been using to turn the bacon.

“These are a *part* of you, Will. You were perhaps always meant to grow them, and now you would rip them out like an unwanted mole?”

Will blinked. “I….”

Hannibal reached up to touch them again and the sensation made his whole body heat.

“They’re growing,” he said, almost in awe, “I imagine….if you let them grow in fully, they’ll be magnificent.”

Will blushed. “I….I don’t….”

Hannibal’s hands at his horns went down through his hair and rested at Will’s cheeks.

“You could be forfeiting a gift and not even know its worth. Would you take that chance?”

Will blushed. “What….what am I gonna do about Jack then? About….about work? I….”

Hannibal’s hardened gaze softened as his smile widened, and he caressed Will’s cheeks making him almost purr.

“Leave Jack…and the rest…to me. I will be your paddle in this, as I was for treading through the murky waters of murder. You can take a leave of absence at work, and….I will support you until your….transformation is finished.”

Will’s chest tightened as he frowned. “Transformation? That’s….a scary word to use.”

Hannibal moved his hands away and stepped back to return to the bacon.

“What word would you use then?”

“I….I sort of feel like Gregor Samsa, so….Metamorphosis?”

Hannibal frowned and looked at him. “I have no intention of letting you starve, Will, nor will I do anything but care for you in this. You know that, yes?”

Will’s heart skipped a beat as he blushed. “I….yeah, I…sorry I was just kidding. It’s been… I’m not as ok with this as you are.”

Hannibal took his hand and squeezed it just once before he let go.

“Please just rest. I will cook and care for the dogs. Go lie down. You look quite tired.”

Will suddenly felt tired, his limbs almost heavy, and he sighed.

“I…yeah I am a little tired.”

Hannibal reached up to run a hand over his head, and Will shivered as he touched both his horns one by one. “Rest.”

Will smiled, feeling warm, and went right to bed laying down to watch Hannibal cook in the distance. All the fear from earlier seemed to disappear as his eyes grew heavy, and for a moment his eyesight must have been playing tricks on him because for a moment just before he closed his eyes—-it looked like Hannibal had horns too.

But that couldn’t be.

Right?

He fell asleep fast, right into a nightmare where he stood in the middle of Hannibal’s dining room covered in blood staring at the fallen bodies of everyone he knew.

Will looked at his hands, the blood dripping, and he wanted to scream but when Hannibal’s hands came around his waist he just purred, leaning into his arms as he heard, “Magnificent,” in his ear.

He woke up panting, sweaty all over, and Hannibal looked concerned above him frowning as he patted Will’s forehead. “Will.”

Will let out a long shaky breath. “I….I had a nightmare.”

Hannibal made a sound, not unlike a growl, and it made Will’s whole body relax as he touched his forehead again. “What happened in it?”

Will blinked.

“I don’t remember.”

Hannibal sighed. “Perhaps it’s best if you don’t.”

“But….”

He reached out holding a steaming plate, and Will’s stomach growled as he smelled the meat.

“Hungry?”

Will suddenly was ravenous, grabbing the plate, and began to eat as Hannibal did the same watching him with a smile that he returned.

There really wasn’t anyone else he’d rather be sharing this with, he realized, and blushed bright red when he thought about sharing *other* things with him.

“Will?”

Now was *not* the time to think like this.

No.

“I’m fine.”

“You look uncomfortable.”

Will blushed harder. “N…no,” he said, “I’m fine.”

Hannibal smiled. “Good, that’s….I’m glad. Your transformation is taking much out of you, I’m sure. You need all the nutrients and strength you can get.”

Will bit back an almost purr, not looking at him, and ate slower now while he shared a few glances Hannibal’s way.

He was so lucky to have him be so calm about this.

He was—just so lucky to *have him* at all.

Will suddenly felt heat fill him, his body aching, and he reached up with a gasp. “Oh.”

“Will?”

He looked at Hannibal. “Are they bigger?”

Hannibal looked up, blinked, and smiled. “Yes, they are. They’re already developing a slight curve.”

He reached out to touch and Will recoiled, nearly falling off the bed. “I…I’ve gotta….”

Will ran to the bathroom where he stared at himself again, shaking as he saw the change. His horns were much more hornlike now: curving at the tips, and when he ran his hand down there seemed to be a back section branching off.

“Dammit.”

“Will.”

He turned to look at Hannibal as his eyes filled with tears. “I’m scared. What if….at the end of this I turn into a monster?”

Hannibal walked up slowly, his frown deepening, and he put both hands on Will’s face.

“The world is full of monsters, Will. You would not be the most frightening, especially to me.”

Will hugged him then, he couldn’t not, and Hannibal’s tentative hug suddenly became tighter as he sighed into his neck.

“I’m so glad you’re here.”

Hannibal smiled against his cheek. “So am I, Will. So am I.”

Day 22: Orphan

It was not every day an omega was found, nor was it every day that they had no family to claim them.

Yet the buzz in Hannibal's inner circle was that there was such a diamond waiting to be plucked.

"….I hear he's just the right age, too. Prime breeding age, and not one of those outspoken messes like some can be if they're too educated."

"….better allow one of us a chance and not just give him to anyone."

"….mating contract is binding. If I say I'll mate him and give enough the city is bound to give him to me."

An omegan orphan.

What a delight.

Hannibal remembered the last time an omega was found alive and well, and the fallout from their family's insistence their daughter was 'not for sale.' He knew the state run centers were not so strict.

After all, he'd done extensive work in them during his residency.

He walked the ballroom then, just before the curtain rose, trying to catch snippets of information but ended up just skipping La Boheme to call the only person who may know.

"What do you want?"

"Have you heard?"

Hannibal's brother Nigel scoffed on the other end of the line.

"You think I wouldn't? An omega with no one to help them. I expected you to call sooner, Brolis. We both know how you like to play."

His lip curled. "I was not even thinking such things."

"No? Why do you want to know about him then? You gonna adopt him?"

"Perhaps."

Nigel laughed. "Bullshit."

“He’s going to be bought and sold if someone doesn’t---”

“You don’t give a shit about omegas, Hannibal. What’s the catch?”

Hannibal stopped at the valet, shaken. “I….I am unsure.”

Nigel was quiet.

“He’s seventeen, nearly eighteen. Once he is…”

“Where is he?”

“They’ve got him in the Omega Center downtown. No one knows.”

“How do you?”

“I have my ways,” Nigel said, growling.

“You got your Adam from the same center.”

“I didn’t….”

“That is where you found him,” Hannibal growled, “So you know how to get me in the doors.”

Nigel sighed. “He’s got no one,” he said, “And they’ll want money.”

“We have money. *I* have money if it’ll get me in the door.”

“Fine. I’ll call you back.”

“Please.”

The call ended and Hannibal’s car was driven up, while a few of the valets looked his way in interest. Had they heard his conversation?

He walked up to the nearest two, all betas, and flashed several hundred dollar bills.

“You heard nothing.”

The young betas all split the money, nodding, and Hannibal left headed to the center.

He was not going to miss out on this opportunity, no matter how underhanded he had to be. There was something about this one, even if he’d never seen or smelled him.

Just something.

And he couldn’t let someone else take him.

Nigel’s call came halfway there, and he gave him a name.

“Bronson,” he said, his voice tight, “He’s a guard there and he can get you in the door. He’ll want money.”

“I can get some. Thank you, Nigel.”

“Yeah, whatever.”

“Tell Adam I said hello, and I hope his pregnancy is going well.”

Nigel sighed.

“It…it is. Thank you.”

“Goodnight, Nigel.”

“Happy hunting, Hannibal.”

The call ended and Hannibal smiled as he headed for the nearest ATM.

Tonight he’d meet this omega and talk his way into taking him.

He was, after all, a thoroughbred.

How could they say no?

Day 23: Musician

There was a concert in town.

Will had never been one for concerts, or really the type of fan culture that bred such parasocial relationships in them. He liked music, sure, especially when he was younger, but money had been tight growing up and when it wasn't he'd long since cared enough to go.

But that didn't mean he was immune to traffic from them.

He sighed as he got stuck in the long line coming out of the arena, mostly with drive share stickers on their back windows that he could see from here.

It was apparently going to be a long wait.

Will turned on the radio, knowing he had nothing to do, and heard the tail end of an intro on a rock station. "…and one of the biggest singers around now, right? I think he's gotten four Grammys? Five?"

"I don't know, Jim, but I do know he's pretty hot."

A chuckle made him roll his eyes and he was about to change the station when the music started in the back of their banter.

"Well, here he is the big man in town tonight after a sold out concert, Ripper."

The music made Will frown, and he suddenly had a strange sense of déjà vu. It sounded a bit like a song one of his old neighbors had played for him on the piano. He felt his chest tighten as the music rose, and suddenly whispered, "Hannibal," as he heard the first line.

"You took my heart, then. A boy with life left, gone away, and the blood on the walls left memories of smiles past that haunnnnt meeee…..still. Will."

Will blinked. "W…"

He felt tears fill his eyes as the music came faster, obviously hand played piano, and there was nothing with it. Just the sounds of pain, and Will took out his phone to type, "Ripper Will," into the search engine.

'Ripper, the singer known for his soulful dark ballads that range from painful to angry, is better known by his given name, Hannibal Lecter. Born in…"

Will dropped his phone, eyes wide, and looked up at the arena sign just a turn away from him.

Hannibal.

The boy he'd been madly in love with the summer he turned fifteen.

The boy who'd given Will his address, begging him to write, and never wrote back when he and his family had been abruptly deported back to Lithuania for reasons he'd never known.

The boy who'd written a song about him.

Will went back a page and saw the article for 'Will' and saw that no, it wasn't just a song.

It was a whole fucking album.

Every single song had been about him.

He felt his heart beating wildly, and tears filled his eyes as he realized his aversion to social media, music, and TV had made him never know about the boy from his past who'd become a rockstar.

Will looked at the venue sign again and suddenly drove up on the sidewalk, hearing car horns beep, and went over the grass back towards the venue that should be emptying now. He parked, got out, and ran to where he saw a group of people standing by a fence.

This was insane, he knew that, and he also knew he'd have to pay the thirty eight dollars when he left the venue even if Hannibal wasn't there.

He pushed his way to the front and several people screamed, "RIPPER!" as a hooded figure headed for a bus.

Will didn't know what to say.

'It's me?'

'Hey, Hannibal?'

So, he said the first thing he could think of saying.

"YOU NEVER WROTE ME BACK!"

The figure turned, hood dropped, and Will saw for the first time that Hannibal wore almost skeletal makeup for his shows. There were dark circles over his eyes and mouth, and he had on white around them.

"I WROTE EVERYDAY AND YOU NEVER WROTE BACK!" he said, his voice shaking.

Hannibal turned to his guards and then headed inside as Will watched the doors close. He leaned against the fence with a sigh.

"What the heck were you yelling about?" some woman asked, "Did you really think that was gonna work?"

He didn't move, chest feeling tighter, and then turned away only to get barely a few steps when out of nowhere someone grabbed his arm.

“Hey, what…”

“Will?” the man said, his gruff glare making Will pause.

“Um, yeah.”

“Come with me.”

Will knew he should say no.

He had no idea if this was about Hannibal, or just some weirdo grabbing him.

But he just nodded and several fans gasped as he was dragged off.

“What…”

“Mr. Lecter would like to see you,” the man mumbled, “But you need to be searched first.”

Will nodded, heart pounding, and tears filled his eyes as he remembered how long he’d sent those damn letters.

Three years.

None of them came back, not one, and Hannibal never responded.

It was the only way he’d been given to contact him, and the rejection had stung. They’d been friends, so damn close, and Hannibal just ignored him like that. Will knew his upset had been worse because of his crush, but Hannibal hadn’t known that.

Or maybe he had?

What had the line been?

‘You took my heart?’

The blur as he was taken into the back of the arena and practically strip searched was fueled by his thoughts swirling about the last twenty years. How was Hannibal so successful that this? He had to be, what? Thirty seven now? And that many Grammys?

What had changed?

Will remembered how often he’d spoken of becoming a doctor like his father.

What happened?

“He’s done,” someone mumbled, and Will was pulled then out the door from the bland room he’d been felt up in and taken outside. The cool air hit him like a slap in the face and he gasped, shivering a little as he was all but pushed to the tour bus with open doors. He swallowed and took two steps up, smelling---

“Patchouli,” he said, smiling as tears filled his eyes, and he turned to see Hannibal sitting on a plush couch, “You’re still using that scent?”

Hannibal’s face was washed now and the years since they’d last seen each other had done him well. He was just as handsome, if not more so, than the last time he’d laid eyes on him.

“Hello, Will.”

Will’s lip quivered. “Hi Hannibal.”

Neither of them smiled.

“I do believe we have much to discuss,” Hannibal said, moving over slightly, “Please have a seat if you’d like.”

Will swallowed. “I…um…the letters?”

Hannibal’s eyes narrowed and his lip curled. “What letters?” he asked, “I received none, nor…any responses to my own.”

Will blinked. “What?”

“Please, Will. Sit.”

He did, tears falling down his face, and Hannibal’s hand came to rest on his without a word, squeezing. Will shivered as their gazes met.

“I’d never forgotten you,” Hannibal said, his voice tight, “Not once. I….your memory was tainted by your rejection of me but….you were never forgotten.”

“I didn’t—”

“I know that now,” Hannibal whispered, squeezing his hand, “I…I would say I could call my parents and ask them to explain but they have been dead for nearly two decades now so….”

Will blinked. “What?”

Hannibal’s eyes were teary as he smiled at him. “My family was murdered the summer after I met you,” he said, his voice shaking, “I was the only survivor.”

“Oh god.”

“I….I kept writing,” he said, “I even….the last letter I sent was a plea for a response, I…to see you now….”

Will sighed. “I’m so sorry, so…”

Hannibal nodded.

“Why now?” he asked Will, looking down at their hands, “Why….”

“This is gonna sound crazy but I don’t own a TV,” he said, his voice thick, “I have a laptop, but I just use it for emails and basic news. I don’t….I don’t follow celebrity culture or even really listen to new music I didn’t…”

“And yet here you are.”

“I got stuck in traffic,” he said, his voice barely above a whisper, “And then I turned on the radio and they played….”

“Will,” Hannibal said, looking up, “Did you enjoy it?”

“The little I heard, yeah,” he admitted, “I….I then looked you up, and I knew your name I knew….god, why now? Why---were there other songs about me?”

Hannibal shook his head. “I…I had an epiphany just last March and decided to pour out my heartbreak from that time into an album and I unburied all the sadness I’d kept away from myself. I….I was ready to let you go.”

Will smiled. “Yet, here I am.”

“Yes.”

Will looked at their hands and then took his back as he stood up. “Shit, you’re probably dead tired. You just performed; I should go. I…”

Hannibal grabbed his arm and yanked him down. “No, please….no. I….I need little sleep and I…” Hannibal’s voice broke, “Will, please don’t go.”

Will’s eyes filled with tears. “Ok.”

He sighed. “Thank you. I….I can make you something to eat, perhaps? Were you…why were you in the city?”

“I was getting dog food for my dogs,” Will said, blushing, “It’s a special blend and the store was hours from my house. I didn’t know about the concert and got stuck in the traffic I…”

Hannibal smiled. “You have canine companions?”

He nodded. “Seven.”

Hannibal’s eyes widened. “Seven? I suppose that’s to make up for your father not letting you have them as a boy.”

Will blushed. “You remember.”

He took Will’s hand again and brought it to his lips. “I remember everything.”

Will swallowed. “Um…then you…you knew I had a crush on you then?”

Hannibal blinked. “You…you did?”

He laughed and sat up more, their hands parting as he leaned his up on the top of the couch. “Like a raging crush,” he said, “And my dad didn’t know I was into guys so I….god I was terrified he’d beat me bloody if he found out. I’ve never…” he blushed, “God, we haven’t seen each other in twenty years, and I feel like it’s only yesterday we had sleepovers in your basement. I…”

Hannibal moved closer, their bodies flush together, and Will swallowed around a lump in his throat.

“I suppose tonight will be a sleepover if you’d…will you stay?”

Will nodded. “Y…yeah.”

Hannibal’s eyes lit up and he grinned. “Wonderful. I….oh! You haven’t heard the songs. Would you like to?”

“Um, ok?”

He watched Hannibal run off into another room and fell back against the couch, shaken up more than he cared to admit.

This might be a mistake.

It had been decades since they’d last seen one another. What if Hannibal had turned into some kind of stuck up snobby---”

“Would a live performance be welcome?”

He turned to see Hannibal holding a guitar.

“You…you play guitar?”

Hannibal smiled as he sat down with it. “Your attempts to teach me going horribly aside, I….I do believe I play rather well, yes.”

Will’s heart skipped a beat.

“I can’t wait to hear.”

Hannibal licked his lips and moved his hands into position, pic right against the strings.

“Then, let’s begin.”

Day 24: Pretend Hate

TW: animal gets hurt but he's ok. A little bit described of his wounds.

Will knew he was being set up with someone the minute Beverly and Alana told him to "wear something nice" to their house for dinner.

It was universally known that Will *never* wore something nice to their house, just his normal clothes, and they both knew that. The only nice thing he'd ever worn around them was the suit to their wedding five years ago.

He could smell the blind date already and was pissed off enough to say, "You know what, I think maybe I have plans on Saturday," in response.

His phone came to life and he cursed, staring at Bev's name for what felt like forever before he answered.

"Will Michael Graham," she said, "You are *not* gonna cancel on *my wife* at the last minute, are you? Because that's unbelievably fucking rude when she is going out of *her way* to---"

"Who is she?" he asked, jaw tight, "Who are you setting me up with? If it's that Molly, the answer is no. Just because we both have dogs doesn't---"

"What the hell are you on about?" Bev said, not skipping a beat, "We're not setting you up with *anyone.* Why---"

"You said 'wear something nice' Bev. That either means you're getting married again or there's a date in the future for me tomorrow. I didn't get any invitations so it's safe to say I have a date."

She sighed.

"Will, it's not a date and if it was, it wouldn't be with Molly. She got married last month."

"Oh, thank god," he said, sitting on his bed, "Now you can stop trying."

"Plus, since I found your porn stash that one day I know that I don't have to stick strictly to girls anymore so…."

Will groaned falling back on his bed.

"If you bring that up *one more* time, Bev, I swear I'm gonna never come to dinner at your house again. I don't care if it's for a goddamn baby announcement. I'm never coming."

Bev snickered. "Will, c'mon it was funny."

“I couldn’t look at you for almost a month.”

“And now you can. You know, there are lot of cute guys out there. Not all of them have dogs. Some of them….have cats.”

Will laughed. “Bev…I hate you.”

She laughed. “You love me.”

He sighed. “I do.”

Bev sighed. “It’s not a set up,” she said, though he didn’t believe her, “I….it’ll be nice. Ok? We’re having your favorite.”

“Mc Donald’s?”

“Will…”

“Roast beef.”

“Yes.”

“I swear if you’re lying it’ll be another month.”

“I’m….it’ll be nice, Will. Ok?”

Will closed his eyes again, his chest tight.

It was a guy then.

Had to be.

Will wasn’t even out or had *ever* even been with a guy other than his fantasies. Why would they think this was ok?

And why was he still gonna go?

“Ok.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow night.”

“Bye.”

“Goodnight.”

The call ended and Will rolled onto his side, the dogs whining, and he got up with a groan.

“I’ll bring home big macs tomorrow night, ok, everyone? Lots of big macs.”

The dogs barked, knowing the words, and he let them out walking to the porch. He looked into the back yard, the moonlight hitting the grass illuminating his pack of seven dogs, and he

felt his stomach lurch as the worry over tomorrow hit.

He really shouldn't go.

It was a terrible idea.

Why Bev and Alana thought he could do this or would *want* to be so blindsided made no sense. He sighed again and sat on the porch swing, swaying back and forth as the dogs played.

Then, to his horror, he heard a loud scream from one of the dogs and the others started to bark. Will shot up and whistled, running as some of the dogs came toward the house but one was missing.

Winston.

"WINSTON! WINSTON WHERE---"

Will heard another loud scream, the howl making tears fill his eyes, and he ran faster pulling up his phone's flashlight and cursing that he hadn't went to get his shotgun.

"WINSTON!"

He spotted him, right there in the middle of the woods, and Winston wasn't moving.

The rest was a blur.

Will remembered picking Winston up, nearly dropping him twice, and wrangling the other dogs into the house before he raced to put Winston on the table. He saw the wounds, all over, and knew he couldn't fix this.

The all night vet clinic was nearly an hour away.

He got there in forty five minutes, somehow dodging cops, and didn't even remember putting the dog into the car. Will screamed, "GET DOCTOR HANSON!" but no one said anything, taking Winston as he nearly fell to his knees.

Winston had only been with him for three months, found wandering, and he'd avoided the vet because he could have a chip. But if it meant he would live, he'd be fine losing him.

He would.

He put his head in his hands, letting out a sob, and couldn't stop crying even though he felt eyes on him the whole time.

It took four hours before anyone came up to him.

And when they did it wasn't Doctor Hanson.

The man in the doctor's coat was much younger than Doctor Hanson, and almost abnormally attractive. Will was torn between blushing and bursting into tears at the sight of the blood on the doctor's coat.

"Mr. Linley?"

Will swallowed. "Um, n…no."

The doctor, whose nametag said, "Lecter" frowned. "Were you not the man who brought in Skippy, who had been attacked by an animal?"

He sighed. "Winston," he said, "I….it's a long story."

Dr. Lecter cocked his head. "Did you take someone's animal?"

"No, I…"

Dr. Lecter pulled out a tablet and scrolled. "I was told by the staff you yelled for Doctor Hanson," he said, "Doctor Hanson has not worked here for almost a decade," he looked at Will coldly, "Who are you?"

He glared at him. "Is he alive?"

"As am I nearly positive Skippy is not your dog, I do not think you deserve to---"

Will stood up and got in Lecter's face. "I found him wandering the street *alone*," he said, tears filing his eyes, "He was *starving* and I could see his bones. Mr. *Linley* didn't deserve him. I've had him two months and he's gained back all his weight and he loves my other dogs. He…." he could hardly see through his tears, "Is he alive? Just…."

Dr. Lecter frowned and his expression softened. "He…he is," he said, as Will nearly fell to his knees, shaking as he went to wipe his face but was given a handkerchief, "Um, thank you."

"You're welcome, Mister…"

He blew his nose loudly and they walked over to the seats as Will saw there were very few people in the waiting room – one older man who had fallen asleep and a young woman looking on a tablet herself.

"I'm not sure I should tell you," he mumbled, sitting as Lecter did the same, "You might call the police for dognapping."

Lecter smiled and put a hand on his chest. "I promise you, Sir….I have no intention of calling the authorities. Winston….I do believe he's in good hands."

Will swallowed. "You said his name was Skippy."

Lecter looked at his tablet again, tapping on it, and began to write then tapped again. "I do believe I was mistaken," he said, as Will smiled, "It says here his name is Winston. Though I

don’t have an address or a phone number for you, Mister…”

“Graham,” he said, sniffling, “Will Graham. I…my number is…” he told him, and said, “I’m not sure about the address yet. Can’t be too careful.”

Dr. Lecter smiled as he tapped the screen. “I suppose not,” he said, “You never know what types of people us veterinarians are. For all you know I could have a kill room in my basement.”

Will laughed. “Right? I’ve seen Dateline. I know my stuff.”

Dr. Lecter’s smile faded slightly. “All jokes aside, Will,” he said, touching the screen again, “Winston is fine. I had to sew him up, and I do believe he was attacked by an animal. Judging by the size of the wounds it was likely a coyote.”

Will shook his head. “He’s new,” he said, “I….the others know not to go beyond the trees. I….I really do need to put up a fence in the back but I….god, I feel awful.”

“You didn’t hurt him. You saved his life, truth be told. He’ll have to be here perhaps for a few days until he’s mobile but he’s sedated and his heart is beating normally,” he patted Will’s hand, “You did well.”

He swallowed and pulled his hand back, blushing as he pushed the glasses up on his nose. “I…thank you, and…thanks for the….the thing with the chip.”

“Of course.”

“You could get in trouble for that, right?”

Dr. Lecter smiled. “For what?” he asked, winking, “I know absolutely nothing of which you speak.”

Will smiled. “My mistake.”

They sat there for a moment, saying nothing, and Will tried not to stare at him. “If you need to leave, the front desk can call you when…”

“I’m staying,” he sighed, leaning back, “At least tonight.”

Dr. Lecter frowned. “You’re sleeping here? I told you he’s stable.”

“Can I see him?”

The look on Lecter’s face seemed on the verge of something, like he wanted to argue, but he just nodded and stood walking toward the desk. Will followed blindly and they walked down the hallway until he opened a door.

There was Winston, connected to machines, and Will let out a sob as he walked inside.

“Oh god.”

“He’s fine, I assure you.”

Tears filled his eyes as he walked up, touching Winston’s paw, then pet his head.

“Good boy.”

“Will…”

“I know I can’t stay in here but…”

“I’m sorry but no.”

He nodded. “It’s fine. I’ll go back, I just…”

Lecter sighed. “You can stay as long as you need to,” he said, walking over to grab a rolling chair, “Please sit.”

Will sat down and Dr. Lecter stood there watching them.

“As if tonight couldn’t get any worse,” Will mumbled, petting Winston again, “I….god I really should’ve watched them.”

“Every owner makes mistakes,” Dr. Lecter said, “I….I’m sure if you’re having problems in your own life it would’ve clouded your judgment. You’re only human.”

Will smiled up at him. “If I didn’t know any better you sound a little like a psychiatrist.”

Dr. Lecter smiled. “I almost was,” he said, leaning against the bed where Winston lay, “But I….I struggled with the human body or…I suppose human patients,” he bet Winston’s back, “There is something about animals that…I feel an affinity to.”

Will blushed, watching him. “Oh.”

“I do still have remnants of that time,” he continued, looking up at him as Will looked down, “Colleagues who I’ve kept in touch with, things of that nature, and I suppose talking with them brings out the years I spent in that field. One friend in particular I just recently reconnected with, as I’ve only been in Virginia a short while.”

Will blinked. “Oh?”

“Yes,” he said, smiling, “I’ve only worked here for four months.”

“Oh wow, that’s…I mean….I don’t come here that much so I wouldn’t know.”

Dr. Lecter’s smile widened. “I suppose it….could be because Winston is not your…only dognapping?”

Will blushed and looked down. “I’m not saying anything.”

A soft laugh made him look up again. “Neither am I, I assure you. Though being known as the doctor who nabbed the notorious ‘Dog Napper’ would make me quite notorious. It would

be something I could tell my date tomorrow evening, I suppose."

Will blinked as he felt an odd tightening of his stomach. "Date?"

Dr. Lecter nodded as he looked down at his tablet again, then at Winston's machines, typing.

"The acquaintance I spoke of, she has decided to *set me up* as they call it. I'm not familiar with this practice but she thinks this man and I will get along rather well and promises that it'll be…"

"Nice," Will finished.

He turned to look at Will. "Yes," he said, frowning, "That is what she promised. Will?"

Will picked up his phone and scrolled then turned the phone to him.

"Is this her?"

Dr. Lecter looked at the phone blinking. "Yes, that is Dr. Bloom and her wife, Beverly. How…"

Will scrolled again and showed him a picture of himself with both women. "I'm the man," he said, sighing, "I…god, I'm sorry. I can't believe they'd. I knew Bev was lying to me."

Dr. Lecter frowned. "Lying?"

"I told her I didn't want to be put in this position," he mumbled, "And she said it wasn't a date. This will be the fourth time they've done this and it always goes horribly wrong. The last time I was able to figure out the woman was a serial shoplifter and she burst into tears running from the house. It…" he put his head in his hands, "It was a disaster."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be," he said, not looking up, "I just….I wish they'd…" he blinked as he looked up at him, smiling, "Wait," he said, then laughed, "Wait, wait! I KNOW WHAT WE CAN DO!"

Dr. Lecter smiled slightly. "What do you mean?"

"We can still go," he said, getting up and starting to pace, "We can go, and we can pretend we don't know each other but…" he stopped to laugh, "We can pretend to *hate* each other. Like seriously hate. Like the whole night it can go awful and then they'll never do it again."

Dr. Lecter's smile faded. "Why not just cancel? Surely…"

"Bev would kill me if I canceled so late," he said, shaking his head, "We don't even have to do it for long, ok? Just to get back at her."

"Alana would be upset with me if I lied to her."

“It’s not a lie, it’s just….theater,” Will said, trying to justify it, “C’mon, please? I’ll buy the whole office lunch next week if you just do this. I just…” he frowned, “I just don’t want them to interfere with my life anymore.”

The frown on Dr. Lecter’s face made him do the same, as did the silence. “You know what?” he said, laughing, “Nevermind. I…I’m gonna go wait in the---”

A hand grabbed his shoulder as he tried to leave, and he froze.

“I…I will,” Dr. Lecter said, making Will turn to see him smiling, “I suppose it will be fun to…put on a show.”

Will grabbed his arm and squeezed. “YES! You’re the best! I….” he blushed, stepping back, “I mean…thanks.”

A loud alarm came through and Lecter’s face fell. “I must---”

“GO!”

He took off running and Will sat back down petting Winston again.

“I think maybe….this was supposed to happen, huh? I’m glad you’re ok, Winston, but….I think this was some kind of….”

He didn’t want to say fate.

Will didn’t believe in fate.

Happy accident?

That sounded better.

He leaned against the bed, frowning, and pet Winston’s back. “Good boy,” he said, tearing up again, “I….I’ll put up that fence, yeah? I….it’s a long time coming.”

It seemed a lot of things were a long time coming.

The fence.

And getting Bev and Alana off his back.

He’d make both happen soon.

And then things would be much better.

Right?

Day 25: Scientists

The lab was Will's home away from home.

And it was for that reason he was now stuck there for the foreseeable future.

He sighed, pacing, and froze when he heard throat clearing.

Will's jaw tightened. "You're supposed to be sticking to *your* area," he said, not looking, "That was what you told me you'd do."

A sigh. "Will…"

"Dr. Graham," he spat, turning to sit on the uncomfortable bed he was stuck with, "Dr. Lecter."

He heard footsteps, the tap of Lecter's fancy shoes and rolled his eyes.

"We're stuck in this rat cage until they figure out how to…reverse what you did."

"I did not mean to…"

Will turned to glare at him and paused when he saw Dr. Lecter wasn't wearing a coat or even a tie. It wasn't a normal look for him, even after the last three days he'd somehow had a wardrobe of clothes lined up while Will was stuck in scrubs that they passed through the slot.

"You mixed up my drink with the sample," he said, his voice shaking, "And then drank it *yourself* when I got mad at you, like some kind of lunatic. Who knows what OMEG-24 will do to us. It's a hormone genetic multiplier. It's supposed to be for women and men who struggle with conceiving children. We were *years* away from human testing!"

Dr. Lecter glared at him. "You were going to be stuck here alone because of me, I…" he frowned as he scratched his arm, his face turning red, "I did not see the harm in it. The drugs were not lethal."

Will scoffed, suddenly warm, and swallowed as he looked away. "You're supposed to be a doctor," he mumbled, "Every drug has the potential to be harmful. You know that."

"Will."

"Don't call me Will," he snarled, shaking as he felt hot, fanning himself, "I….leave me alone."

The whine he got in return made his chest tighten. "A…as you wish."

Will laid down on the bed with a sigh, staring up at the ceiling, and the ache he felt at Lecter's departure was palpable. The lab was sectioned off into several areas with no doors and they'd kept to themselves – as per his request – the last few days while the other doctors

came in to test each of them. There had been no changes as of yet, but the fear they'd possible be any kind of contagious made quarantining for two weeks a must.

But quarantining with Dr. Lecter? The one scientist in the lab who was such a pompous asshole that they had *never* worked together if they didn't have to? It felt like torture.

Though, right now he felt an odd….longing.

Will scratched his cheek.

"Stupid drug," he mumbled, "Why wouldn't he put it in the vials? It wasn't…"

The sound of a familiar voice made him smile.

"Good afternoon, Sunshine."

He looked up to see Dr. Katz standing on the other side of the door and got up to greet her.

"Bev."

She frowned. "You look pissed. What did he do?"

Will sighed. "He just keeps….I don't know…getting on my nerves. It's driving me crazy."

"You sure it's that? It's not any side effects?"

He scoffed. "No. Though I have felt a little hot. Is the AC working?"

"It's a lab, Will. The AC is required to work."

"Oh," he mumbled, scratching his neck, "I…" he froze.

"Will?"

A lump was on his neck, about two inches in size, and he felt his throat tighten.

"I….there's something on my neck."

"What? What's…"

Will came up closer to her, turning his neck, and she stared. "Shit. Does it hurt?"

"I…no."

"I'll come in," she said, stepping back, "I have to get changed, ok? Just give me a minute."

"Ok."

He walked over to his phone, turning the camera, and touched the bump.

It felt weird, like it had always been there, and he caressed it again as heat filled him.

“Will?”

Will turned at Dr. Lecter’s voice just as he heard, “Hey Hannibal,” and the low hiss that came from Dr. Lecter made him smile a little then he just looked away.

“Bev’s gonna….um….”

“Why is she coming in here? There are no scheduled examinations?”

“Will’s got something,” she said, “You might want to steer clear, ok? You….” he heard her gasp, “Oh shit. You’ve got one too.”

Will turned and looked right at Dr. Lecter’s neck.

His bump was just like Will’s – two inches – and stuck out in an almost exaggerated way.

“Shit. It’s spreading,” he sighed, “Bev, did…”

It happened so fast Will was more shocked than anyone when the minute he saw Bev walk up to Hannibal – Dr. Lecter – and move to touch the bump he attacked her. She screamed as he knocked her over, snarling, and an alarm went off as he was suddenly screaming, “MINE!” and then was sedated before he could do anything else.

He woke up in bed, but not alone, Hannibal was practically glued to his side.

Will didn’t tell him go.

“Is she ok?” he asked hoarsely.

“Yes.”

He sighed. “I don’t know what happened.”

“Dr. Katz has a theory.”

“It’s bad, isn’t it?”

Hannibal reached out to touch Will’s neck and he purred, nearly melting as heat filled him.

“We’re developing animalistic instincts,” he said, as Will leaned into his touch, “And have formed a type of bond in the days we’ve been infected.”

Will laughed. “What? That’s insane.”

“You tried to kill a woman you once told me was your best friend for touching my neck, Will. What other explanation do you have?”

He pushed his hand away with difficulty and sat up, shaking his head. “Temporary insanity.”

Hannibal sighed.

“I know you despise me, Will,” he said, making Will frown, “The only explanation for your jealousy would have to be instinctual.”

Will wanted to correct him.

I don’t hate you.

Because he didn’t.

They’d gotten along once, back when Hannibal first came to the lab, and then….well….how could you tell someone who rejected you that the reason you didn’t like them anymore was because they hurt your feelings?

He was a grown man not a child.

Will turned away. “Can you just go?”

The bed dipped and Will bit his lip to take back his request.

He didn’t want Hannibal to go.

Far from it.

But this had to be over soon.

They only had been in here for a few days, and the drug had barely been a blip into its development.

There was little chance it would do much.

Will sighed as he laid down, staring up at the ceiling, and felt the memory of the day Hannibal rejected him return full force and he pushed it away.

No.

Not going there.

He closed his eyes, trying to calm down, and thought for a minute he could almost *smell* Hannibal nearby.

That was ridiculous.

Neither of them had cologne on, and they both showered with the same bland body wash that had no scent.

He really was going crazy in here.

And with so much longer to go, it would only get worse.

Day 26: Victorian Era

A/N: I tried. If I got anything wrong about Victorian stuff, please tell me. lol. I'm so used to Regency I had to look up the difference.

TW: murder and descriptions of mutilated bodies

Bells went off in Wolf Trap, echoing throughout the streets as the police signaled the worst.

The Ripper had struck again.

Will Graham woke to the sound of them, cursed, and heard his hound barking at the noise.

“Winston, heel!”

His mutt came in, apologetic, from the next room and he patted his head with a sigh.

“Good boy. I must go, but please be good? I wouldn’t want to wake the neighbors.”

Winston licked his hand and he smiled slightly before he went to dress.

His home was less than ideal, really, but with his lately abnormally long nights and sporadic sleep it seemed best to have a place such as this. It was small, barely more than two rooms, and showed off his meager monies but it was not as if he was an eligible bachelor.

No.

Most eager brides to be were not looking for a man who could barely sleep at night for his dreams, let alone one on a meager salary befit a consult. He got dressed, walking to his mirror, and fixed his coat sleeves before he headed out.

He was grateful for the waiting automobile outside on the street and slipped inside.

“Hello, Fischer.”

Allan Fischer, an actual policeman, sat in the driver’s seat looking as tired as Will felt.

“Hello, Will. I….” he grimaced, “It’s another. Crawford says it’s even more gruesome than the last.”

Will sighed as he sat back. “Take us then.”

Allan nodded and took off, the automobile chugging along, and he watched the world be so still at this hour. He wished he did not have to go, that he could keep these awful things to their gruesome scenes, but he was needed.

No one could get into the head of such monsters like he could.

He consulted more so than ever lately, his teaching job stalled for reasons he dared not think of, and it paid him just enough to get by.

Will sighed again as he leaned on his arm.

“The Count is there.”

He blushed, pushing the glasses up on his nose as he mumbled, “Why?”

“He is the only doctor near enough by to formally declare it.”

Will scoffed. “That seems to be his excuse at *every* Ripper scene. Are there no doctors in Wolf Trap anymore?”

Allan huffed. “Most of them are too cowardly to come to such a mess. Lecter is….oddly calm at these scenes.”

Will wanted to say, “As am I,” but didn’t.

Allan and he got along well, the younger man often bringing him to the late night murders such as these, which was rare for the rest of the police force. So, he stayed quiet until they pulled up to a rather elaborate gated house.

“This…”

“Another rich one,” Allan said, rolling down the window to show his identification then rolling the window down, “The Ripper seems to love them.”

Will’s chest tightened. “The last one was not rich at all.”

Allan sighed. “Not all of them have been, but he does return to them often.”

He did not interject, careful with his words always, and when they pulled up he saw Lecter’s very obvious expensive automobile waiting. Will showed off his own identification at the door, not waiting for Allan, and stepped inside only to freeze.

The place was covered in red.

“Oh heavens.”

It was all over the walls, the furniture, and right there in the midst of it was who he assumed the house belonged to. Will walked over, mesmerized, and saw a woman twisted up into a knot, somehow tied, with flowers sticking out of every angle while long vines spread with them like they were growing. She had red hair, matching the rest of the room, and tears filled his eyes when he saw flowers stuffed inside of her open mouth.

“Will.”

He jumped at Jack Crawford’s voice and locked eyes with him. “Who….who was she?”

Jack sighed. “Dr. Bedelia…”

“…DuMaurier,” Count Lecter finished, making Will now actually let out a sound, “I apologize, Will,” Lecter said, frowning as Will tried not to look at him, “I did not mean to startle you.”

Will looked at the woman.

“She lives alone?”

“Yes, she….she was rather forward thinking on the subject of marriage and perceived it as unnecessary. Her father was an oil baron and left her a considerable amount of monies to live on indefinitely so she did not need to marry.”

Will swallowed. “I….you knew her?”

“Yes, we were colleagues,” Lecter said, looking at her sadly, “She was a very intelligent woman. I grieve for losing her this way. It did not have to happen.”

Will frowned at him, feeling almost as if he wanted to touch, but instead looked away.

“I’m sorry.”

“Thank you. It….”

“Can I have the room, Jack?”

“Yes, of course,” Jack said, “EVERYONE OUTSIDE!”

Will tried not to look at the other officers as they passed, as most did not care much for him, and saw Lecter in his periphery not moving. “That includes you, Count.”

“Are you certain you’d rather do this alone?”

“Y…yes.”

“Will…”

“Please leave.”

The reluctant steps taken made him almost endeared to the man who at every opportunity had proven to be nothing more than a distraction. Count Lecter was a head doctor, though he had been a surgeon long ago he’d decided to go a different direction. Will had no love for his type – rich, pompous lords who looked down upon most – but Lecter seemed almost determined to get his eye.

If Will didn’t know any better he’d think the Count fancied him, but that could not be.

Will, a disheveled mess who regularly had night terrors and lived in a place smaller than the foyer to the Lecter estate being courted by one such as the Count? Preposterous.

He stared at Ms. DuMaurier, taking in the grotesque beauty that had been made of her, and closed his eyes only to open them as *him.*

The Ripper.

Will walked around the body with tears in his eyes.

I did not want her to suffer, as most others had.

I only wanted to silence her but she mocked me and I….I had a message to send.

He opened his eyes, shaking, and walked up to the body sticking his fingers into the mouth letting the flowers fall.

There, stuffed inside, was a note.

"JACK!"

All at once several officers and Jack, along with Hannibal, came inside. "Will? Did you touch the body? What has gotten…"

Will held up the note. "This was in her mouth."

Jack raced over, taking the note, and opened it only to look up at Will.

"What?"

He turned it over and Will stepped back in shock.

It was a beautiful hand drawn portrait of him.

Will's eyes filled with tears. "What madness is this?"

Jack turned it around again and grimaced. "It seems you have an admirer, Will," he said gruffly.

"The Ripper? That…"

He turned to Lecter who seemed almost saddened. "Will."

Will fell back on his backside, shaking, and stared at the body.

For him.

This was for him.

It seemed that while Count Lecter was far above his station, he did have a marriage prospect after all.

He put his hands over his mouth, hiding a maniacal laugh that wanted to come out.

This did not feel real.

And yet, as he saw the police reach into the victim's mouth more flowers fell, and he stared at them more closely for the first time.

Sweet William.

His father had always told him he was named after the flower, his mother's favorite before she passed, and now the sight of them made him ill. Tears filled his eyes as he felt a hand go to his shoulder, and he looked up into Count Lecter's eyes.

"Why me?"

Lecter frowned, shaking his head. "I don't know, Will. I….I just don't know."

Will closed his eyes as tears fell down his cheeks.

The thought of actual *knowing* seemed worse than never being given reason.

This was not one of his night terrors.

But he'd never been more terrified.

Day 27: Younger/De-Aged

TW: underage pre-slash, grooming

Will stared out the window as the cars flew by and dreaded the end of their trip more with each passing mile.

Family reunion.

Could there be any two worse words in existence?

"…and Aunt Bee wants you to see her cats."

He faked a smile. "Ok, Dad."

Will drowned out the rest of what his Dad might say for the next three hours, eventually falling asleep only to have his father shake him roughly when they stop.

"Will!"

He startled awake and wiped his eyes. "We're here?"

"Yup," Dad mumbled, "Cmon, kid."

Will sighed as he watched his Dad walk out toward the house and looked back at the ton of cars behind him.

This was gonna suck.

He dragged himself out of the car, locked it, and then frowned when he saw a car that had no place being here at a Graham reunion.

It was way too nice.

Will rushed over to his Dad. "Whose car is that?"

Dad turned to look and scoffed. "Maybe Melanie finally met a decent fella? Or Sherrie?"

He frowned.

"Maybe."

His cousin Mel was in her early thirties and had run through her fair share of boyfriends, all scumbags as far as he knew. Sherrie had lost her husband in the Army last year but she really didn't seem to type to date a rich guy.

They walked up to the door to Aunt Bee and Uncle Bud's door to knock.

And when the door was opened by a complete stranger Will froze.

“Hello,” the stranger said in an obvious foreign accent, “I’m willing to guess your last name is Graham?”

Will blushed as his Dad just stood there. “Who’re you? Where’s B—"

Uncle Bud came out of nowhere gently moving the stranger aside. “John! Will! I see you met Dr. Lecter!”

Will couldn’t stop looking at the strange man in a loose button down and khaki shorts with sunglasses pushing back his bangs. He was the most handsome man he’d ever seen that wasn’t in a movie or something.

And even those men weren’t even close.

“…and I told him he didn’t need to spend Memorial Day weekend alone, ya know? We’ve got plenty of food and all that,” Uncle Bud grinned and patted Dr. Lecter on the back, “You’re an honorary Graham today, Doc!”

Dr. Lecter smiled and Will’s belly flipped as he looked at him. “I’m honored.”

Bud led them all toward the back screen doors and Will’s Dad glared at Dr. Lecter’s back. Will knew that look. Dad hated doctors in general - they rarely went unless school demanded it - and he hated “rich bustards” even more.

Dr. Lecter was both.

Oh this wasn’t gonna be fun.

He let out a long breath as they walked out to the backyard and he heard, “WILLIE!” and there was Aunt Bee headed toward him with open arms. Will hugged her back as she kissed his cheeks.

“You’re getting so big! So handsome!”

Will blushed as he stepped back, pushing the glasses up on his nose as he smiled.

“Thanks, um…” He saw Dr. Lecter walk by and their eyes met for a brief moment making his heart beat faster as anxiety overtook him. He looked away., “Where’s the restroom, Aunt Bee? I don’t remember?”

Bee grabbed his arm and pointed at the back door. “Go right in the door and turn left then three doors down it’s there. But if there’s any body in that one I got one in my bedroom on the left.”

Will nodded and headed inside past the crowd needing to anywhere but here. He took the left turn and saw the door was closed so he went right.

And saw Dr. Lecter on the bed.

He froze. “Um….”

Dr. Lecter looked up and smiled. “Hello again. Will?”

Will blushed. “Um, yeah, hi. I was just—"

“Using the restroom?”

“Yeah,” Will said, not moving.

“You don’t seem to be in a hurry.”

He blushed harder. “I just…” he grabbed the bottom of his shirt, “I just wanted to be alone.”

Dr. Lecter frowned. “Not one for crowds?”

“N…no.”

He got up then and walked to close the door, making Will panic a little, and he stepped back. “I have no ill intentions,” he said, reaching out his hands, “May I?”

Will nodded as he took his hands, squeezing. “I am not sure you’re aware of my affiliation to your Uncle Bud. Are you?”

He swallowed and shook his head.

“I am his primary doctor,” Dr. Lecter said, “But I began my medical career studying psychiatry.”

Will frowned. “A shrink?”

“That is not your word,” Dr. Lecter said, “If belongs to your father, yes?”

“Y…eah,” Will whispered, his hands sweating now but he didn’t let go, “Dad says shrinks just…tell kids it’s all their parents fault and take your money.”

Dr. Lecter smiled. “Spoken like a father who knows it’s his fault.”

Will frowned. “My dad….”

He squeezed his hands. “Is not why I’m holding your hands,” Dr. Lecter said, “Close your eyes, Will.”

“Why?”

“Trust me.”

“I don’t know you.”

Dr. Lecter leaned in closer and Will could smell his cologne.

He liked it.

“Trust me.”

Will closed his eyes, heart beating wildly in his chest.

“Take a deep breath for me.”

Will sucked in a breath.

“Let it out slowly, but…think about the place you are happiest. The place you’re the most calm while you do.”

He thought about fishing with his father, wading in the quiet of the stream, and let his breath out slowly.

“Where are you?”

“The…the water,” Will whispered, his voice shaking, “Wading in the stream behind our house while I…I fish with my dad.”

“Every time you feel overwhelmed, Will, or anxious, do this. Think about the quiet of the stream.”

Tears filled his eyes.

The anxiety, the pounding in his chest, all of it.

Gone.

He opened his eyes.

“Thank you, Dr. Lecter.”

Dr. Lecter smiled, still holding his hands.

“Hannibal,” he said, his voice making Will blush again, “Call me Hannibal.”

Will smiled. “Hannibal.”

They stared at each other for far too long before Will stood up. “I…they’re expecting me.”

“Of course.”

He licked his lips.

“Thank you, D—Hannibal.”

“You’re welcome. I could not let such a beautiful young man stay in such distress if I could help alleviate it.”

Will laughed nervously. “I’m not—“

Hannibal stood and stared down into Will’s eyes. “You are, Will, and should be told so often. It’s a shame you haven’t been treated as you should. A terrible shame.”

“I…”

“OH SHUT THE FUCK UP ROB YOU LAZY—"

Will ran into the bathroom as he heard voices, not even sure why, and shut the door leaning against it as the heart beat so fast he could barely breathe.

He felt an odd sensation build in him as he remembered how Hannibal - Dr. Lecter - had looked at him.

What was that?

And why did he like it so much?

Day 28: Caretaker

TW: death

The long journey from school to home had taken several weeks and as Lecter House bloomed into view Hannibal felt it had all been worth the wait. He had not seen his family for nearly seven months now and the idea he would soon be reunited made him growl out, “FASTER” to the beta driving his carriage.

His alphan instincts clawed at him to be home, to smell the scent of the familiar, and as they neared the house his hopes were dashed when he smelled something unexpected.

Blood.

He nearly leapt out of the carriage, heart pounding, and snarled as his shifted form burst through racing toward the doors.
“SIR!” he heard, but the thought of PROTECTkillSAVE was all he knew as he burst through the doors only to find his mother laying on her back with a knife in her chest.

Hannibal howled, running up the stairs, and found his father.

He shifted back, wailing, and screamed, “MISCHA!” hoping with every breath in him he’d near her answer.

A howl came, making him shift again, and he raced towards the sound only for an expected sight.

A human stood in his path, covered in blood, and there behind him was his beloved sister.

“DO NOT COME ANY CLOSER!” the human screamed, blocking her.

Hannibal shifted back, snarling, and said, “She is my sister, human. I will come as close as I---”

“BROLIS!” he heard, and Mischa pushed past the human to run into his arms, sobbing as he hugged her.

Hannibal glared at the human, who slumped to his knees, smiling strangely as they hugged.

“Oh thank heavens,” he said, as Mischa shifted, “She….I didn’t…”

“Who are you and what are…”

The human fell then to the floor and Mischa yelled out, “WILL!” running to his side.

“Mischa---”

She howled and turned to Hannibal. “He’s hurt, he…there’s blood, Hanni! There’s b---”

Hannibal rushed over, opening the human’s clothes with such force the buttons flew off, and saw not just one wound.

He saw seven.

There were bruises littering the human’s body, indicating he put up much fight, and also several worse wounds.

One of which was a deep knife wound in his side.

“Oh you stupid,” he lifted him, heading for the nearest room which happened to be his father’s own, thankful for the medical bag at the bedside. His schooling suddenly made his anguish vanish as he worked, cleansing as best he could and patching the human up as he’d been taught. It took nearly a quarter hour but he finished to his own satisfaction, turning to see Mischa curled up against the wall in tears.

“Sister,” he said, his voice shaking, “Mischa….”

She raced to him, sobbing, and he held her as she wailed.

It took nearly an hour for her to sleep, the pain too much for her tiny frame, and he laid there beside the stranger who he realized with a start was not only a stranger.

He was…an omega.

How had his parents come across a human omega?

Omegas in most circles were rare, anomalies so sought after some were put to marriage auction yet this one was just here?

How?

Why?

Hannibal didn't move, just watched, and when the human did wake he reached for Mischa who gladly took his scent. He found he could not argue, as she needed the comfort, and the two of them watched each other.

"Who are you?"

The omega sighed. "I….I am Mischa's caretaker. I….I….I minded her for your….your…." the omega closed his eyes, "I made certain to protect her, Sir, I swear to you. I…." he held her tighter, "I would have gladly given my life for her in exchange for what your parents did for me."

Hannibal felt tears fill his eyes. "What happened here?"

The omega closed his eyes and buried his face against Mischa's head.

"I….I cannot speak yet of it," he said, his voice shaking, "I….forgive me."

Hannibal growled. "I will not ask my sister and you….if you do not tell me…"

The omega opened his eyes and glared his way. "You would force me to relive the horror of the last day, Sir? You…you would be that cruel to the man who saved your sister?"

"You…"

"Hanni?"

They both froze as Mischa turned to look at Hannibal, eyes bloodshot. “Yes, Mazasis?”

Her eyes filled with tears.

“Who is….Verger?”

Hannibal froze.

No.

It could not be.

It could not be.

“A very, very bad man,” the omega said, making his head shoot up and their eyes met, “You….you need to stay away from him.”

Hannibal eyed the bruises on the omega’s hands and his gaze softened.

Perhaps this omega knew more than the average worker.

Perhaps….he’d seen much, much more.

“Yes, Mazasis,” Hannibal mumbled, his voice tight, “He’s very bad.”

Mischa sniffled. “I….I don’t…I don’t want to see him. I….” she buried her face against the omega again.

The two of them stared at one another, silently communicating, and part of him felt a bond almost form. He tried to tamp down on it but the feeling held, and he moved closer even as the omega glared at him.

“D---”

Hannibal reached out to touch Mischa's hair, dirty now, and said, "She is my pack. You, are not. Omega."

The omega froze. "You….you can smell me?"

Hannibal frowned, stopping his touch of Mischa's hair. "Whatever do you mean, man? Your scent is distracting? I'm shocked I did not smell it from the road. My carr---"

The omega swallowed. "I….I take high grade scent blockers. It should be impossible for you to scent me."

He blinked.

No.

Absolutely not.

He sighed.

"I highly---"

The omega reached out to touch his neck and he practically melted, feeling sleepy, and pushed his hand away.

"Oh."

He snarled and grabbed his sister, disregarding her want and kept her close to him.

"You….we will not speak of this now. Do you understand?"

The omega nodded, at a loss for words, and just laid there so close yet so far away. Hannibal had no idea what had happened to his parents.

But one thing he did know.

There was no way he was truly meant to be mated to a human.

Absolutely no way.

Day 29: Forced Into Hiding

tags: season three fix it, hannigram au, character death - not Hannigram

It was cold.

Honestly, it was always cold.

Will sighed as he put more logs on the fire, half leaning down as he rubbed his hands together, and for a moment he thought he heard dogs barking.

But he didn't.

There was no one here but him.

It had been that way for three years and wasn't going to change.

He sat on the floor, rubbing his hands together again, and closed his eyes.

"You miss me."

Will blinked back tears, lip curling, and he didn't open them.

"No, I don't."

"You let them cage you, forcing you to live as far from me as possible, and every single day you think of me. Do not deny it."

He couldn't, really. The aftermath of Hannibal turning himself in had made him numb to the world, and he'd agreed to everything: testifying, moving, and being put into witness protection. Will had let them take his dogs, his life, and for what?

Nothing.

Hannibal wouldn't hurt him.

He knew that.

And yet here he was three years later hiding like a scared animal so sure the predator was waiting beyond the trees while even the hallucination of Hannibal in his head knew the truth.

"What a waste, letting them tame you. We both know what you truly wish for."

He gritted his teeth as he felt a tear fall down his cheek. "No one forced me to do this."

"No? You let them take you, lock you away, and yet I volunteered to be put where you could find me. Did the prospect of knowing I would wait for you for all eternity frighten you so

much? Or….did it excite you to have such power over me?"
Will opened his eyes as he yelled. "I DON'T CARE WHERE YOU—"

The empty space where Hannibal should be made him freeze, hands shaking, and he reached out to nothing.

"Dammit."

Will got up and went to his desk, taking out a piece of paper.

He wrote down one sentence.

Tell me the end of our Story.

Will wrapped up the letter, hands shaking, and printed out the envelope nearly dropping it. He rarely left the cabin, only for supplies, and the nearest post office was almost an hour from here.

He didn't put on any return address, unsure, and sent it out with several other things: subscriptions, returns to an online pro shop, and even just a money order donation.

It would mean nothing if they were watching, and he was sure by now no one was.

Will thought it might take a week.

Jack Crawford showed up on his porch three days later.

It was barely past seven when he heard the knock, something he never had, and his heart pounded as he walked up only to be disappointed.

"Jack."

Jack didn't move. "He escaped."

Will's heart skipped a beat and tried not to let it show in his face. "Oh."

"Can I come in?"

"I…."

Jack pushed past him and walked inside.

"You need to get ready to go," he said, without looking at Will, "There are plans to move you to Alaska, maybe even somewhere in France, we're not—"

"Jack."

"---can't be too careful," he finished, turning to look at Will, "Why aren't you more upset by this?"

Will folded his arms. "He's not gonna hurt me."

“Will….”

“He won’t even know where I am.”

Jack didn’t move. “No?” he reached into his pocket and tossed Will’s letter at him, “This showed up in his mail just yesterday. ‘Tell me the end of our Story.’ STORY, Will. Did you think that would get past me? YOU LIVE IN STORY, WYOMING!”

“There are other….”

He rushed up to Will, their faces inches from one another, and Will’s lip curled as Jack yelled.

“YOU TOLD HIM WHERE TO FIND YOU! You….why now? Why….”

Will felt tears fill his eyes. “I didn’t.”

“Will, I might have been too stupid to realize how close you were getting to him when we were trying to catch him but I’m not stupid anymore! I will not let you stand here and lie right to my face. I came here to give you the goddamn benefit of the doubt but now….now I wonder if maybe you….” he stepped back, frowning, “You might be more dangerous than I thought you were.”

Will laughed. “Jack…”

Jack suddenly pulled up his gun as Will took a step forward and he froze, putting up his hands.

“Tell me why you sent him that letter.”

Will let out a long breath as a tear fell down his cheek. “I….” he smiled, “I wanted to see what he would do. If I…..could….”

“Pull on my collar and see if I’d come home.”

He froze as Jack rounded at Hannibal, who came out of the back bedroom wearing a pair of blue jeans, a baggy sweatshirt, and a baseball cap, and before he could say anything Jack pulled the trigger.

“NO!”

Hannibal moved to the side, quicker than Will expected, and Jack fired again as Will suddenly came to life. He rushed at Jack, grabbing his neck, and Jack dropped the gun as Will tightened his hold.

The look of surprise on Hannibal’s face was well worth the horror on Jack’s as he fought Will’s hold, hitting his arm, and Will suddenly snapped his neck like it was nothing.

He felt nothing as he stared at Jack’s fallen body.

“Will.”

Will looked up at Hannibal, who had tears in his eyes, and he walked up to him slowly, taking both his hands and kissing them one by one.

“Hannib—”

“I thought you brought me here to rid yourself of me,” he said hoarsely, smiling through tears, “And yet you brought me a gift. A beautiful gift.”

Will let out a sob. “It doesn’t….it doesn’t feel beautiful. It….”

Hannibal put both their hands at Will’s cheeks, moving in closer, and Will could see several days worth of beard growth on his face.

“Righteous protection from the only being on earth I would willingly let cage me is….I have no words to describe the joy I am feeling. Will…”

Will smiled through his tears. “You’re here.”

Hannibal smiled. “I am here.”

“I….I missed you. I….”

He sighed as Hannibal kissed him, ever so softly, and he pulled him in closer to deepen the kiss just enough to make them both ache for more when they parted.

“My life was half since we’ve been parted,” Hannibal said, still holding his hands, “I feel whole again,” he looked down at Jack’s body, “We must go.”

“Where?”

“Chiyoh is waiting.”

Will laughed, tears still streaming, and kissed him again. “Of course she is.”
“Ready?”

“To break free of my cage?”

Hannibal’s smile widened. “Yes.”

“I’ve been ready,” Will whispered, squeezing his hand as he turned away from Jack’s body, “For so, so long.”

Hannibal let him out, their hands still entwined, and he had no idea why but he trusted him. This might end badly. He’d be hunted, chased, and looked for for the rest of his life.

But it felt more like a life now.

And for the first time in three years….he wasn’t cold.

Day 30: Joker - Thriller

TW: some gore

The body of Dr. Abel Gideon was wheeled out of the apartment building from the third floor, only two doors down from Will's own, and the chill that went down his spine made him shiver. Though the actual cold followed.

"Will."

He turned to see Bev coming over, and he hugged her tight as she sniffled.

"Hey, you ok?"

"This is number five," she whispered, as he kept her close, "Why aren't the police doing something?"

Will sighed. "They told us to leave, Bev."

"It's our home," she said angrily, "Why should we have to go? It's the cheapest rent in town, why the hell would anyone leave?"

The cops came over and Will braced himself as Detective Crawford stopped in front of them. "Will."

"Jack."

Bev sighed. "Ok, enough. Jack, what are you doing about this?"

"Ms. Katz…"

"Don't Ms. Katz me," she spat, poking him in the chest, "Five people have died in three months. There are only ten units in our building. No one new is moving in because they're scared out of their minds and we're not going anywhere."

“Ms. Katz,” Jack said, making Will almost smile, “There’s very little I can do with no motives and no evidence. This killer is systematically wiping out the entire building and none of you will leave. Save for condemning the place I---”

“Jack!”

They all turned and Will blushed, pushing his glasses up on his nose as he saw who was heading their way.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Their landlord and quite possibly the most handsome man Will had ever seen close up.

Beverly scoffed as Jack met Hannibal halfway, the two men talking out of earshot.

“Careful, you’re drooling.”

He blushed and stepped away from her. “I am not.”

Beverly grinned. “No, but you thought you were soooo…still counts.”

Will sighed. “Bev…”

She playfully bumped him. “I’m just joking, you know? I…I know you have a crush.”

Will’s face turned even more red. “I don’t…”

“Will, he might not know it but most people can see your crush from space. If you’d just---”

“I DON’T HAVE A CRUSH!” he yelled, glaring at her.

A cough made him freeze.

Oh god.

“Pardon the…interruption,” Hannibal said, making Will want to throw up, “I just came to see how my tenants were faring with the…horribleness.”

“We’re good, Dr. Lecter,” Bev said, “Sorry, Will’s just on edge. He has a….a crush.”

“Bev…”

“Oh?” Hannibal said, making him look up now at his tone and frowning when he saw Hannibal’s sour look, “Is it someone in the building?”

“If the two of you could…”

“Oh he’s for sure in the building,” she said, grinning as she tapped him again, “He’s head over heels but the guy doesn’t even know. It’s sad, really.”

Will felt tears fill his eyes. “I’m….just…”
He rushed off, motified, and walked over to the first police officer he saw.

“Excuse me?”

The man turned and Will saw “Zeller” on his shirt. “Yeah?”

“How much longer?”

Zeller glared at him. “We’re making sure the building is safe, Sir,” he said, “I think you can wait a few minutes.”

“I…”

“Will!”

He froze.

Oh god no.

Will tried to pretend he didn't hear his name, turning fast to head back to Bev and Hannibal, but then Matthew Brown came up to wrap an arm around his back, head nearly on his shoulder.

"Can you believe this shit?" he asked, "Five. We've all gotta stick together, you know? Just…" he nearly pressed his lips to Will's ear, "To be safe."

Will tried to push him off but Matt was surprisingly strong. "Yeah, you're right. Matt, I've gotta…"

Matt turned him. "If you ever feel scared or anything, you can some sleep at my place. The first floor is better, I think, cuz if we need to run out the doors are right there, you know? We…"

"Am I interrupting?"

Will pushed him then hard, catching Matt off guard as he looked at Hannibal. "No, we---" he frowned.

Hannibal looked positively furious.

"I think the police say everyone can go inside now," he said, "I've decided to make this month rent free for the five remaining tenants for this trouble."

"Whoa, really?" Matt laughed coming up to pat Hannibal on the back, "You're amazing, Doc!" he grinned at Will, "Can you believe this guy? Greatest landlord ever."

"Thank you," Hannibal said, smiling now as his gaze softened, making Will's stomach tighten, "I appreciate the….appreciation."

Matt grinned at him. "You deserve it."

"I….I'm going inside," Will said, "Goodnight."

"Wi---"

Will rushed off, unable to stop the tears that stung his eyes, and made his way inside where Bev was waiting by the stairs.

“Bev?”

“Can I sleep at your place?”

“Yeah, that’s…yeah. C’mon.”

The two of them went up together, side by side, and before he could say anything Bev followed him in his apartment then right to his bed. He didn’t want to say – no you can’t sleep with me – so he just didn’t say anything.

It wasn’t the first time he’d shared a bed with someone but things never really worked out.

His nightmares always ruined it.

“Bev…”

Will heard her soft snoring before he could even fully got on his back and smiled.

“Nevermind.”

He turned off the light and sighed in the dark for what felt like an eternity.

Then woke up to the sun.

Bev was gone, a note left of “Thanks for letting me stay” making him smile and Will made himself a quick bagel and coffee about to take a bite when he heard a scream coming from downstairs.

No.

Bev’s apartment was downstairs, one of only two still occupied – including Matt’s.
He dropped his food, running out the door, and the screaming kept on coming as his heart felt like it was in a vice.

Will was relieved when he saw the slight crowd on the left instead of the right and his heart started to pound as he slowly made his way down.

Matt Brown was laying on the floor of his apartment, right there in the doorway, spread eagle and cut open from stem to stern.

“Will!”

He rushed to Bev then, tearing up, and she hugged him.

“Where were you, I---”

“I went to get donuts,” she said, “I called into work halfway to the subway and then I….I’d say I’m upset he’s gone but…”

Will tried not to smile. “Bev.”

They both sighed.

Six down now.

Four to go.

The two of them, Georgia, and Peter.

Will took a donut when Bev held out the bag in her hand, and had a small bite as the police came in yelling, “Back to your homes please! This is a crime scene!”

He let Bev drag him up, shaken, and barely remembered even after they were both on the couch.

“Maybe we should leave.”

Will sighed.

“Yeah, maybe we should.”

Day 31: Two of the Above - Retail Worker + Wings

Will hated working retail.

The hours were shit, which was why he had to drive every other day to make ends meet, and the customers were worse.

He'd tried to get a job at a bookstore, or even an outdoor type shop, but ended up at Du Maurier's, a department store where most people were hoping to get great deals but mostly got scammed. If he hadn't made fast friends with his coworker, Beverly, he'd never have stayed, but the two of them always tried to work on the same shifts so it was bearable.

But tonight's shift was Beverly-less, and he was stuck with Frederick Chilton as he sat at the perfume counter while Chilton gave out samples.

Though it was funny to see how freaked out Chilton got over the shifters.

Will didn't have anything against shifters really, most were really nice and while it had been jarring after The Great Awakening now years later it felt like common place. But Frederick always got terrified when one of them came up to him no matter how rich they looked and Will's delight made him pause to watch several times already.

Which was why he didn't notice someone was at the counter until they cleared their throat.

He jumped back, eyes wide, and blinked.

Oh.

The man at the counter was wearing a very well red checkered blue suit, hair slicked back, and smelled just amazing even from here. He was one of the most handsome men Will had ever seen close up, which was slightly intimidating to say the least.

And he also had the strangest wings Will had ever seen.

They were black, almost skeletal, but the inner parts looked soft to the couch.

A bat?

Were there shifter bats?

"Excuse me."

Will blushed and pushed the glasses up on his nose. "Oh, sorry," he said, laughing nervously, "I was just…"

The shifter frowned. "Staring at my wings," he said, his eyes suddenly turning red, "It is quite rude to stare."

“I wasn’t---” he started, mortified, “I promise I’m not one of those anti-shifter people. I’m not. I don’t have any shifter friends, but I’m not. I think….sorry, Sir. How may I help you?”

The shifter’s wings fluttered, and Will fought not to look at them. “I’m not entirely sure you should be the one who helps me.”

“I said I was sorry,” Will said, getting annoyed now, “I’m not really sure what else you want me to do.”

“I just---”

The shifter just shook his head. “I think I’ll go elsewhere.”

“Wait!”

The minute he was gone Will fell forward, head in his hands.

Just his luck. The hottest most intriguing shifter he’d ever seen, and he hated Will on sight.

The sound of a disgruntled, “Disgusting,” made him turn, moving his fingers, and saw Frederick was getting a new bottle.

“What?”

He didn’t look up. “I can’t believe those things are allowed to just walk around like that. I saw one with wolf ears today, walking hand in hand with a rabbit. Can you believe that? The thought of what their children might look like will haunt my nightmares.”

Will glared at him, getting angrier the more he spoke, and felt his hands shaking.

“…and I think they should just have been put down the minute they…”

He grabbed Frederick’s tie hard, pulling him in close, and gritted his teeth as he spoke.

“If I have to hear you one more time saying shit like that about shifters I’m gonna strangle you. You hear me? They’re just out there living their lives, I don’t---”

A cough made them both turn and Will froze.

It was the bat.

Or the…the shifter with the wings that might be a bat.

His eyes were red and his wings were folded in oddly as he stared at them. Will let Frederick go and almost laughed as he ran off, nervous to talk to the shifter again. “Hello, Sir,” he sighed, “I wanted to apolo---”

The shifter leaned in, nostrils flaring, and then his wings fluttered oddly. “You…” he moved back fast, cheeks slightly flushed, “I do believe it is I who should apologize. I thought your staring was because you were against shifters, and now I see that is not the case.”

Will swallowed. “Um, no. I…like I said I’m not anti-shifter. I…”

The shifter smiled. “I heard every word you spoke,” he looked at Will’s nametag, “Will. I know. Can I ask for your expertise now on a gift?”

Will smiled. “I…yeah, sure. What are you looking for?”

He pulled out his phone and showed Will a picture of Love Bomb, one of the more popular scents. “She told me this is what she wanted specifically, but I do not see it on the table.”

Will frowned. She.

“Oh, that’s…it’s one of our most popular, so it gets stolen sometimes. I’ll get it. It’s locked up.”

“Oh, thank you.”

He sighed as he turned, forcing a smile as he leaned down to grab the box set and the individual box. “We have it in a set which retails…”

“I can see the price,” the shifter said, frowning now, “I’ll take both, please.”

Will blinked. “Um, ok. I can ring you up here.”

He didn’t look at him as he did just that, oddly upset to know the hot shifter was buying something for a woman.

Maybe it was a relative?

“Is this…for your mother?”

The shifter’s wings suddenly fluttered as he dropped his wallet. “N…no,” he said, picking it up and setting down a card, “Mischa is---”

“HE ASSAULTED ME!”

They both turned to see Frederick walking with security and Will’s boss, Mr. Crawford.

“Shit.”

He couldn’t afford to lose this job.

“Will, is---”

The shifter suddenly interrupted. “This man was being discriminatory toward shifters,” he said, “And your worker Will reprimanded him. I saw it all. There was no assault, he merely grabbed his tie.”

Mr. Crawford blinked. “Oh, I…I see,” he glared at Frederick, “Mr. Chilton, a word?”

Chilton paled. “I…”

He grabbed Chilton's arm, pulling him away, and when he was gone Will let out a long breath.

"Thanks," he said, grabbing the card and swiping, "I really need this job."

Will turned the card and saw a name.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Of course, the hot bat shifter was a doctor.

He handed it back and Hannibal grabbed his wrist. "Are you not being paid amply?"

"Um…no?"

"A pity," he said, finger brushing Will's wrist making him blush so hard he was sure he'd burst into flame, "How good are you with children?"

Will blinked. "Um, not that good?"

Hannibal smiled. "You're certain of that?"

"I mean, I haven't been around them much. Why?"

"I am looking for someone to look after my sister, Mischa," he said, as Will's whole day got brighter, "I would very much like to offer you a chance at the position, if you're willing? I know it's very short notice but…with the way prejudices are I…"

Will let out a long breath. "How…how old is she?"

"Eight," Hannibal said softly, taking out a card to hand him as Will bagged the perfume. "I suppose I am spoiling her, aren't I? Do you think this perfume is too adult for her?"

Will just shook his head as he looked at the card. "No, I just…" he looked up, "You're sure?"

"Very," he said, taking the bag as he smiled, his wings fluttering again as his eyes were still red, "I do hope you'll call, Will. Have a lovely day."

Will watched him go, unable to believe what just happened, and stuffed the card into his wallet with shaking hands.

There was no way he'd be good at being a…well…nanny really….to a shifter kid. Right?

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